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DAY OF ACTION!

DOCTOR

WHO

FANS

PLAN

MASS

PHONE-IN

ON

NOVEMBER 30th...



THE DOCTOR WHO APPRECIATION SOCIETY's 1990 convention, PanoptiCon X in October, was the launch-pad for a new campaign which will almost certainly bring the BBC's internal telephone system to a virtual standstill on November 30th.

Months of stalling and false alarms over Doctor Who's future has prompted the call for all fans of the series to show that they have had enough of the BBC's delaying tactics, with many believing that it has no intention of bringing the programme back at all and is simply making no announcement, thinking that it can avert a massive outcry like the one which erupted in 1985 when Doctor Who was put on hiatus.

November 30th has been set as the day when all fans are urged to phone all the appropriate offices within the BBC, as well as the main Duty Office, to register their displeasure at the continual stalling and request that the series be returned to production at the earliest possible opportunity, and with a new and suitable production team.

LEAFLETS DISTRIBUTED

Thousands of leaflets (shown here) have been distributed at PanoptiCon and elsewhere listing the direct phone lines of all the relevant heads of department with whom the decision over Doctor Who's future ultimately lies. It is anticipated that every fan will have a go at dialling each of the numbers listed.

The campaign, which has been organised collectively by various fan bodies, has way of life. Only recently it became its spokesman, who told DWB: "I know how passionate fans, as well as many casual viewers, feel about the way in which Doctor Who is being messed around. The day of action was instigated because we know all genuine fans will want to show the BBC that we are not falling for their delaying tactics. The calls of protest will effectively bring it's phone system to a standstill and then, perhaps, the smug decision-makers on the sixth floor and at BBC Enterprises will realise that no amount of stalling will leave the series forgotten. Doctor Who has been broadcast on British television every year (until this year) since 1963 and is part of the British way of life. Only recently it became the only television programme in the world to have a television channel devote an entire weekend to it, but that was on BSB! It's no wonder that the BBC makes such a killing selling the series on home video since we are being starved of seeing any Doctor Who, old or new, on BBC1!"

NO 'WHO' IN 1991

The campaign was sparked after yet another non-committal announcement from the BBC in early October saying that no decision would now be made until well into 1991, effectively meaning that the earliest the series could return to our screens would be in the Autumn of 1992 - a three-year gap since it's last transmission! Budgets and studios for all of next year's productions have now been allocated and Doctor Who does not feature among them.

Many people were expecting that the BBC would stick to their promise of a genuine clear-cut decision at the end of September following over a year of delay after delay and increasing rumours that Verity Lambert's production company were poised to produce the series.

The string of false hopes began back in August 1989 when it was announced that a decision would be made by the following November, which coincided with new BBC

Head of Serials Peter Cregeen's announcement that "Doctor Who is one of the BBC's most important programmes. There is no reason why it should not run for another 26 years", adding that he was looking for "...the best possible way to take Doctor Who through the 90s" - a claim which he reiterated in the Radio Times - and that this "...may involve having it made outside".

At the time Cregeen was hailed as the great white hope, but on reflection John Jeffrey commented: "What do the BBC really believe is the best way to let Doctor Who last the next 26 years...to give it a 25-year rest and then bring it back for 2 episodes? We hardly think that a minimum 3-year gap is the best way to take Doctor Who 'through the 90s'!"

CHILDREN IN NEED FIRST

Originally the Day of Action was planned for November 23rd, Doctor Who's 27th anniversary, but it was soon realised that

this would clash with the BBC's annual Children In Need fund-raising appeal and so it was instantly rescheduled for a week later to avoid jeopardising the event in any way.

A back-up campaign is already being planned should this one fall on deaf ears, as John Jeffrey explains: "If necessary, more Day of Actions will be mounted, not just via telephones but the BBC's fax system as well!"

PRESS INTEREST

The national press are showing a great deal of interest in the preparations, and The Daily Express and The Daily Star both carried stories in their October 30th editions based on the news which was unveiled in TV Zone published the day before. The News of the World has promised exposure nearer the date and The Daily Mail has also expressed an interest: "The wider the exposure we get, the better," says leading fan Richard Landen.

Help Save Doctor Who Day of Protest

After all these months of waiting, the only way to bring back Doctor Who is to let the BBC know that there are still people who want it back.

Friday 30th November has been chosen as the day of protest, when every fan is asked to make at least 20 phone calls to the BBC during the day. Make your protest politely, asking for the programme back, as promised, with a new production team. Try to take as long as possible with your call.

The Press will be notified of the campaign, so they'll be watching to see what happens.

These are the numbers to ring;

081 576 2529 - James Arnold-Baker, Head of Enterprises, and the man who will ultimately decide if Doctor Who comes back

081 576 2945 - Paul Fox, Managing Director of BBC Television

071 580 4468 - Michael Checkland, Director General of the BBC

071 580 4468 - Marmaduke Hussey, Chairman of the Board

081 576 1981 - Jonathan Powell, Controller of BBC1 (and the man who didn't help Doctor Who much with the last cancellation)

081 576 1800 - Peter Cregeen, Head of BBC Serials, and promised in the Radio Times that Doctor Who would be back

081 576 1434 - Mark Shivas, Head of BBC Drama

All of the above people can bring Doctor Who back. Let them know you want it back

Also ring;

081 743 8000 - The BBC's general number. Ask for the Duty Office to make your protest

081 576 1861 - The BBC's Press Office. They will need to know fans' feelings to pass on to the Press

081 576 1861/1871/1860/7797/7726/7727 are other Press Office numbers, and

081 576 7789 - Keith Samuel, Head of Television Publicity

DON'T LET DOCTOR WHO DOWN. MAKE YOUR CALLS

"The more people who get to hear about it, the more likely we are of reaching our target audience of 500,000 calls. It is more than likely that many of the lines will be engaged due to other callers trying to get through, but if everyone tries to make at least 20 calls on the day then we will all stand a chance of being heard."

With the Australian Data Extract alerting it's members and news of the campaign rapidly spreading through the States via DWM, TV Zone, Starburst and DWB, it is anticipated that the campaign will be a truly international affair.

"The BBC can't help but take notice and act. After all, all we're asking is what they promised they would do a year ago - to take Doctor Who through the 90s - but which they have so far failed to do", explains Jeffrey.

On hearing of the news of the Day of Action DWB called the BBC Head of Publicity, Alan Ayres, but was unsurprised at his response: "It won't make a blind bit of difference."

We shall see...

It's all for you Who!

By IAN BRANDES

FURIOUS Dr Who fans plan to bring the BBC to a halt - with HALF A MILLION phone calls in one day!

Disciples of the fictional Time-Lord say they're fed up

with Beeb's tardiness over returning the Tardis to TV screens. So they plan to swamp it with a phone attack on November 30.

Dr Who buff John Jeffrey said: "We must show that the people who pay their salaries have a say."

The show, starring Sylvester McCoy, was axed last year and the BBC is still deciding its future.

It's likely to be farmed out to an independent production company.

DAILY STAR, Tuesday, October 30

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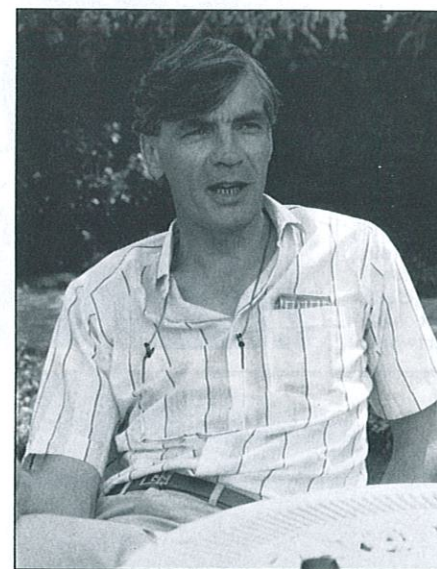
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DWB will be closing its office for one month in the New Year, so it is important that you resubscribe as soon as possible to avoid missing issue 86. See you next month with our bumper Christmas number... GARY

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Two major British 'Doctor Who' conventions of the year: the DWAS' Panopticon X and Nebula 90; 21 - A look at the long-awaited Target novelisation 'The Curse of Fenric'; 22/23 - We talk to the book's author Ian Briggs about the difficulties he faced in translating the adventure into book form.

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BBC VIDEO UNVEILS YEAR OF COLOUR

BBC VIDEO are preparing a colourful year of all new 'Doctor Who' releases for 1991.

Kicking off on February 2nd is the extended The Curse of Fenric (reviewed next issue) and the year's only black and white offering, The Krotons, which completes the Patrick Troughton stories which exist in full in the archives.

No dates have been finalised for the rest of the year, but these will be followed by a neat package comprising Jon Pertwee's last adventure, The Planet of the Spiders, and Tom Baker's first, Robot. While BBC Video are seriously reconsidering their six episode two-tape policy, the former is again destined to be released as a double-tape pack. Originally The Mutants was scheduled for release with Robot, until DWB advised BBC Video that Spiders would be far more appropriate!

The rest of the year will feature The Three Doctors, the long-awaited Genesis of the Daleks (over two tapes), The Masque of Mandragora and an as yet unconfirmed eighth release which is likely to be The City of Death, pending the success of negotiations currently underway with Douglas Adams.

PEARSON BUSIER THAN EVER!

Alister Pearson has been given the task of providing the artwork for all of next year's Doctor Who video releases, in addition to his workload on Target's Timewyrm series and the rejacketing of certain existing novels (see last issue) which now does not include Robot since the reprint will feature Alister's video artwork.



Alister recently delivered his paintings for the new Spearhead from Space and Ambassadors of death book covers (pictured) and has already completed The Day of the Daleks and Death to the Daleks for Target, as well as The Krotons for BBC Video. He is currently immersed in The Curse of Fenric for the latter and is working from his provisional sketch shown here.



It is vastly different to his artwork on the novelisation which was released recently, although W.H.Allen have no plans to re-use it in the immediate future.

BRIEFLY...

BSB is planning to show feature-length versions of three black and white Doctor Who adventures during Christmas week. The Space Museum will be shown on Christmas Eve, The Mind Robber on Boxing Day and The Dalek Invasion of Earth on New Year's Eve. It is anticipated that a feature-length version of The Three Doctors will be shown over the New Year period.

After the success of their recent Who weekend, BSB are reportedly considering a similar event for next year to tie-in with one of the major conventions.

COAST TO COAST (a.k.a Green Light) are currently making a film called Brothers Of Siam, about the story of the world's most famous Siamese Twins, after which it is claimed that pre-production work will commence on the Doctor Who movie from the second week of May. Yet another script revision for the film - now provisionally titled 'The Last of the Time Lords' - is in progress and a deal has still to be put forward to an actor for the title rôle, although Coast to Coast do have their eye on a very English actor... Most importantly, however, is that the level of finance required to make the film full stop has yet to be raised, so don't raise your hopes too much.

A DALEK TOUR To raise money for the BBC's Children In Need appeal will commence from London's Forbidden Planet bookstore in New Oxford Street on November 23rd, taking in various notable Doctor Who landmarks like Westminster Bridge (Dalek Invasion of Earth) and Covent Garden tube station (The Web of Fear), finishing up at TV Centre. Phone (0534) 39193 for further details.



The ever-adaptable Sophie Aldred is as busy as ever at the moment with Corners, and has also landed the part of Saffron in what is described as a "mindblowing psychedelic photomation animation series" to be shown on British television next year.

The production company, TTA/Tigertoons told DWB that Sophie was chosen for her unique charisma and photogenic good-looks - essential ingredients for an animated series in which she will be the only real-life character!

(Right: Sophie promoting Saffron at Nebula 90).



MANOPTICON next March in Manchester has confirmed Jackie (Dodo) Lane as a definite guest - her first-ever convention appearance. Lalla Ward made her UK convention debut at Exo-Space in Exeter in November.

The third TARDIS In Durham has been scheduled for September 7-8th 1991.

UNIT feature in a four-part DWM strip story from #169. Andrew Cartmel has been commissioned to do another script for DWM, which is good news for him because he doesn't appear to be working at the moment.

Incidentally it transpires that JNT is no longer employed by BSB, meaning that he too is out of work.

COLIN REGENERATES... AT LONG LAST!!

THE FRIENDS OF DOCTOR WHO in America have achieved what most thought was impossible - the successful regeneration of Colin Baker into Sylvester McCoy!

History was made in Cleveland, Ohio, on the morning of August 18th 1990 during their A Day With The Doctor II event (see DWB/82), with the hitch-free regeneration transmitted on a huge rear-projection video screen to an ecstatic audience.

Meanwhile The Friends of Doctor Who have Tom Baker as their guest at their Holiday Extravaganza on December 8th at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in New York, one of the highlights of which will be Baker reciting from Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Call (0101) 215-478-9200 for recorded information about the event.



THE REVOLUTION THAT WENT TOO FAR

M. Mac Lochlainn, London (10-10-90)

WELL BLESS MY SOUL! Things don't change, do they?

The last time I read this excellent fanzine, the letters pages had been seized by Pip'n'Jane snipers blowing holes through their hopeless mess of a Time and the Rani script. And they're all still here: the JNT bashers, the born again Wonderful Williams Worshippers, and do I perceive a swelling in the ranks of the Tom Wasn't That Terrific Brigade?

The major difference between now and then is that we no longer have a show to fire shots over! Not in any real sense, that is, and one can't entirely lay the blame at the door of the (ex)bearded one. As any cheese salesman will tell you, if you give the monkey charge of the organ grinder, you can't be too miffed when the audience buggers-off. And no, I am not equating JNT with the simian life-form, but I think the analogy makes the point. Remember the infamous Starburst/Saward interview? "He's a light entertainment man at heart...not a drama producer". Couldn't agree more. On the other hand, I recall speculation in these very pages that Jonathan Powell - who is to all science fiction fans what Joe Stalin was to the Kulaks - was deliberately allowing JNT his free reign in order to get the public well and truly pissed off with Doctor Who and thus circumvent an adverse reaction to cancellation.

If we were to be totally honest, the rot set in with the disappearance of the checked waist-coat. With the gradual deterioration of (Tom) Baker's costume came a steady deterioration in story quality. The post-D9 changes in his portrayal of the Doctor were, I suspect, due to tendencies in Baker that were suppressed by the previous regime, not so suppressed by Graham Williams, and positively encouraged by Doug Adams. City of Death proved that you could have a damn good story under the Williams/Adams ethos, but the comedy element has to be seen as the second major nail in the Doctor's coffin after (no, not the deterioration of his waist-coat) the drop in story/dialogue quality.

Roger Moore could ham James Bond up yet remain credible in the eyes of Jo Public because, a) the spy genre has a great deal of credibility anyway, and, b) because he kills lots of people and has sex with lots of women - adult, realistic and mitigating things. At it's spiritual heights (Clarke, elements of Star Trek...) science fiction is barely credible at best, and the slightest whiff of silliness or self-mockery and it's a write-off.

Then came JNT and everyone hailed the revolution. Everyone, that is, except those who noticed that Baker's costume had become, for the first time, a costume costume, those who weren't that sure about Adric and Nyssa, those who deduced that the best script and dialogue elements were a bit repetitive and suggested heavy input by Christopher Bidmead. Like all revolutions, this one went too far the other way, so fast in fact that it thumped into itself on the way out, bounced back and re-entered N-Space in Panto Land! Even in Castrovalva - a slow, boring psalm to transcendental mathematics, especially after the spectacular chorus that was Logopolis - we get the Master sneering

"That too!" (Remember how JNT told DWM, regarding Anthony Ainley's Master, "(This Master will have) slightly less humour...my own taste in humour is for wit rather than belly laughs". Is he serious?!). Go on, strain your memories. Ah, but then the memory does cheat. Remember also Sarah Sutton's aquatic pratt-fall - oh no it wasn't - oh yes it was!! Who remembers Omega going snap crackle and pop at the end of Lark of Stupidity? As I recall, the anti-JNT lobby took a good two seasons to recover from the Williams era before they realised that they were worse off!!

I think the difference between Williams and JNT is that the former was simply misguided whereas the latter was totally misplaced.

Alan Smith, Wolverhampton (13-10-90)

I was sorry to hear about Graham Williams' very unfortunate demise. Doctor Who seems to have had too many casualties over the last few years. It's a pity your 'tribute' was - in my view - lessened by Jeremy Bentham's over-pretentious style, with yet more totally pointless references to "Dove and Hawk" producers. I've never read such a silly label. Can't Jeremy come up with anything better than that sort of misnomer?

Congratulations, though, on what I think was the most remarkable and frank interview ever in DWM. Jacqueline Pearce came across as a person with a lot more viewpoints on life than just those concerned with acting. It was a real change from the usual type of interview. I was surprised that Peter Linford found it difficult but glad that he made the attempt to stay with the subjects that Jacqueline opened up. She came across as a very intelligent person while not suffering from the drawback of over-self importance that can sometimes occur with high intelligence.

By the way, I think Rick Wilson is right: there is too much Star Trek - Next Generation coverage in DWM. The balance is too heavy, in fact the article in DWM#82 is a piece of pure padding.

Steve Rogers, Suffolk (1-10-90)

The Graham Williams tribute by Jeremy Bentham served not only to be a lovely obituary but also gave an insight to a man who was much maligned by many-a-fan. The best tribute would be BBC Enterprises getting The City of Death out as soon as possible and having it dedicated to Graham's memory.

Another highlight of DWM#82 was the excellent Jacqueline Pearce interview. Peter Linford may have found it hard going, but it certainly provided us with a fascinating and highly enjoyable read.

The Memory Cheats is now the first feature I read each time it appears. It's all those throwaway one-liners I love - Ronald Allen being at the crossroads indeed! Although who proof-read Brigid Cherry's review of The Web Planet and missed her glaring mistake? It's the Optera and not the Menoptera that have the extra limbs! The accompanying artwork by Rob Ashby was superb.

I also enjoyed Tim Munro's Time Tunnel and Dalek film reviews in DWM#81. His comments on the former summed it up perfectly, definitely fun to watch, although Tim forgot to mention the most infuriating part of the programme; with Tony and Doug's apparent knowledge of every historical event they encounter, anyone would think they were historians, not scientists! And after reading Tim's Dalek film reviews I started to think of them in

a different light, but all of this changed when I saw them both on BSB!

COMPLAIN TO BBC VIDEO

Stephen Carlin, Northern Ireland (4-10-90)

I wonder how many people reading DWM actually write to BBC Home Video to complain about the twin-tape six-episode Doctor Who releases? There are those out there, like myself, who seem to write in year after year and so know the old routine, but I am thinking about those who never write anything and probably just grumble with a group of their friends. Don't grumble amongst yourselves - write your grievances down in a polite letter and send them to the BBC Home Video Unit, Woodlands, 80 Wood Lane, London W12 0TT.

As little as two letters can work. I speak as one of many who wrote in about The Brain of Morbius, Terror of the Zygons and The Talons of Weng-Chiang and various other matters. Perhaps we can move that mountain again and we will no longer have to shell out money for something which should really be half its price. Also consider the expense of replacing a twin-tape set should one tape get damaged - another £20 just to replace one tape!



"We've got a chance here, Nick, to make the video even more boring and tedious than the TV version!"

I am also annoyed by the general talk regarding The Curse of Fenric being released on video so soon. I welcome it's arrival. Yes, it is recent and I do have it on tape, but I only tape things because they are unavailable. Once it is available then I consider whether or not it's worth buying...and that it is. I have already suffered from buying the surprise dodo of the year. I have watched The Dalek Invasion of Earth twice, the first time I didn't like it, the second time I hated it even more. Parts one and three were very good, but sadly the rest of it lacked any tension, drama, credibility, and what about that scene in episode five (or was it six?) in which one Dalek explains why there is a bomb about to be sent to the Earth's core (who is this Dalek explaining it too?!). And none of the people in it are characters, the whole thing was totally cardboard. I agree with Tim Munro, give me the film any day: entertaining, watchable and shorter (no padding), and I even felt for the characters in it!

Keith Dando, Wiltshire (20-10-90)

The recent letters sent in by Ian Beard (ref: DWM#80) interested me greatly, as indeed did the reply or, to be more precise, the sarcastic bitching that followed in the next issue. It was very

obvious that this reader did not understand the driving force of Mr. Beard's letter, which was that BBC Video should not label something as unedited if it is not, however little the tampering might be. This is advertising malpractice, and to attempt to foist it upon the generally well-informed and outspoken fans is begging for a reaction. By now BBC Video should have done one of two things: either removed the word "unedited" from their labelling or stopped editing the original material in any way. BBC Video simply cannot be trusted to market their own product satisfactorily when companies like Hendring and Channel Five cannot do enough for their customers.

One final point regarding the anti-BSB lobby, which so obviously stems from jealousy, is that if you've bought all BBC Videos by now they have cost you £240. Add all those crappy and rapidly becoming redundant Target books (I shrink from calling them novels) and your too small Doctor Who underpants and unfine Fine Art Castings and you could probably afford BSB and seen one of the most superb Doctor Who stories ever made. Which one? The Aztecs, of course...

Paul Curtis, Oregon, USA (9-10-90)

I have noted with interest the editing of recent British Doctor Who video releases. The cuts made to An Unearthly Child, The Daleks etc. are exactly the same as those made to the versions of those stories distributed here by BBC Lionheart. This leads me to believe that the BBC Video releases of such stories are compiled from BBC Enterprises' own tapes of the episodes as distributed abroad rather than coming direct from the BBC's archives. Here in America we pay for these episodes by making PBS pledge donations, just as

British fans pay vast sums for videos which have been similarly butchered. It is about time BBC Enterprises recopied all of their Doctor Who material direct from the unedited archive copies for both foreign and video sales.

This is not the only editing to which we in America are subjected. Not only is Doctor Who usually shown here in "feature" format (with the episodes edited together, often very sloppily), and broadcast from old and very worn tapes, but all of the third episode of The Planet of the Daleks as well as a large portion of the fourth is excised from the feature-length edition of that story, and the first episode of Invasion of the Dinosaurs is not shown at all. Simply because these episodes exist only in black and white is no reason not to broadcast them!

REVENGE OF THE COUCH POTATO

Chris Cheffins, Huddersfield (26-10-90)

I read with interest Dominic May's letter in DWM#83 responding to my own in the previous issue. Rather a surprise to see myself described as a "killjoy", "couch potato" and "obnoxious personality", an overly hysterical reaction and, in fact, exactly (to quote Dominic) "the sort of moaning rubbish I would expect from a very spoilt nine-year-old"! My "pathetic excuse for a letter" was written to express the frustration that I'm sure many ordinary fans who can't afford to shell out pound after pound to watch a programme that they used to see for the price of a licence fee have felt. I'm sure that many other "couch potatoes" are annoyed that, in order to see any old Who stories they have to live abroad, preferably in America, subscribe to satellite TV or go to conventions.

And don't be fooled that the Beeb release the videos for any other reason apart from money. I would like to get BSB, but the only reason I would subscribe would be for Doctor Who, but is that really reason enough? Perhaps I'm not that obsessed. There is a solution, however. If, and when, he has finished his little tantrum Dominic could assist me with episodes from his own private horde, I would greatly appreciate it. Pull me out of the couch, Dominic!

I don't like writing acidic letters. They are as unnecessary as the letters that prompt them in the first place.

Stephen O'Brien, Bath (10-10-90)

Sorry Dennis Cattell didn't agree with me concerning BSB (re:DWM#82). Regarding the Galaxy Channel I didn't criticise Jupiter Moon because I was expecting Star Wars-type science fiction (which must be a contradiction in terms anyway). It was because of the tiresome love triangles and some characters having the hots for others - a formula that's repeated ad nauseum week after week on terrestrial stations. It's a repetitive and stifling format. The location is irrelevant since it has very little to do with the plots themselves. If they dealt with something other than puppy-love relationships just once then it might become watchable, but so far they've stuck very rigidly to this 'magic formula' that they believe is the key to a soap's success. Jupiter Moon isn't as radical a soap as Mr. Cattell believes. You've got to hand it to the producers - they've managed to dress up a rather routine and bland soap opera as something a lot more experimental.

By the way, I'm not interested in Pearson's petty squabbles with whoever. Fandom is trivial enough already.

PHENIX PRESENTS

II CYBERCON II

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DWM	

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"The N.V.A.L.A. Sparked Decline"

I WAS VERY SURPRISED to read Henry Potts' letter in DWB/82 (in response to my letter in DWB/81), because for some reason my letter (amongst dozens of letters which have appeared in DWB and elsewhere) praising '60s and '70s 'Doctor Who' whilst criticising '80s 'Who obviously contained something which was provocative.

To respond to Mr.Potts, firstly I agree that my letter expressed an opinion. It is impossible to say anything without expressing an opinion of some sort, because you have to have a standpoint from which to make any statement. Henry himself both fails to give reasons for his view that Doctor Who was at it's best between 1981 and 1986 (a failing for which he criticises me!) and fails to appreciate that being in a minority it is really he who should explain his views. I was indeed expressing an opinion, but one which is supported, for the most part, by Fandom and, more importantly, the general audience at large.

However, as Henry has demanded an explanation, I will endeavour to supply one:

In the same way that most Star Trek fans will say that Season 1 was the best, Season 2 very good but Season 3 largely poor, so I also give my views on eras of Doctor Who, which coincidentally tend to pretty much mirror the views of Doctor Who's audience as a whole across the years. A quick dip into Doctor Who's ratings (as conveniently summed up in DWB/82) reveals some interesting facts:

a) Not one episode from the '80s gained an audience of 11 million-plus viewers.

b) Not one episode from the '80s made it into the Top 20.

c) Based on average audience size, there is not one story from the '80s in the top twenty-four positions (out of 157).

d) Apart from a dip during Patrick Troughton's era (which can be attributed to the fact that the audience found it hard to accept such a drastic change in lead actor, although of course later this gained acceptability and didn't seem to matter), Doctor Who's position and viewing figures season by season improved throughout the years, with the occasional dip here and there, but since Peter Davison's first season there has been a steady decline through to the all time low of Season 26.

e) A look at how the Doctors fared overall produces the following placings: 1st Tom Baker, 2nd William Hartnell, 3rd Jon Pertwee, 4th Peter Davison, 5th Patrick Troughton, 6th Colin Baker, 7th Sylvester McCoy. These placings are all important because they are general audience figures, not just fan figures, and so give a clear indication of the impact of the programme on the viewing public over the years (I'm not saying fans are irrelevant, merely that they give a slightly distorted view as we are all biased due to our informed interest in the programme).

What went wrong?

Assuming that we accept the validity of the figures (allowing for ITV strikes, BBC strikes, length of season, time of year of broadcast, changes of producer, etc., etc., many modifications could be made to DWB's graph to smooth out the overall picture allowing for these quirks), we are faced with a clear question as to why the audience fell significantly for Season 15.

Q: What happened in 1977 to spark the decline?

Q: The National Viewers and Listeners' Association attacked the programme for being too violent.

In my opinion this criticism was largely baseless when you bear in mind the nature of the programme (i.e. the Doctor always wins in the end defeating evil, furthermore it is always necessary to define and exemplify that evil to justify it's defeat). It was a clear case of adults jumping in to protect children where no protection was necessary.

The result? N.V.A.L.A. 1, Doctor Who 0.

Philip Hinchcliffe left, and Graham Williams was faced with producing drama without teeth. Out went "violence" and in came humour and light relief. Not surprisingly many stories largely fell flat, except for those few who dared to go as near to the line as they could (Horror of Fang Rock, Image of the Fendahl, City of Death etc.).

When John Nathan-Turner arrived, he obviously wanted to put back the "seriousness" into the programme. Season 18 was the result, and it lacked a certain 'something'. The audience thought so too; despite the imminent departure of the most popular Doctor, the ratings plummeted in the largest fall ever from one season to the next. JNT then made the mistake of casting Peter Davison as the Doctor. There are two particular reasons why I believe this was an error: firstly, Davison was too well established at the time (and subsequently) as Tristan in All Creatures Great And Small. No Doctor before or since has faced such a difficult uphill struggle to establish himself, and no audience has been asked to so suspend it's disbelief. Secondly, even though (in theory) regeneration could result in any physical manifestation for the Doctor, Davison just looked too young to be a 742-year-old Time Lord. There were other factors.

JNT introduced several other new policies which, far from

renewing the programme, served to psychologically divorce it from it's past: apart from David Fisher (once), Terrance Dicks (twice) and Robert Holmes (four times), he used no writers from past seasons, insisting instead on completely "new blood". Many of these new writers, I submit, failed to understand the programme. Again, with only one exception (and a poor one at that), directors were all "new blood", often failing to produce dramatic Who and failing to grasp the established style of dramatic, moody entertainment punctuated with incidental humour. Gone was the haunting arrangement of the theme music, which had remained largely unchanged throughout the years. Replacing it was a 'bouncy', heavily synthesized version which failed to evoke that sense of menace. Subsequent versions have done little to rectify this. Gone, also, was the mysteriously swirling "howlaround" effect title sequence used with the first three Doctors and the equally effective "time tunnel" used from Season 11 through Season 17. Replacing it was a title sequence which emphasised space more strongly than time, with the titles forming from a, by then, clichéd starfield. Space had lost it's mystery after the lunar landings but time remains a mystery and yet was abandoned from the titles of the '80s.

The effective logo (thankfully retained on BBC Video releases) was altered in favour of a lesser impact, to the point where the latest one would not look out of place on the label of a pair of jeans. Dudley Simpson had provided very effective incidental music since the programme began. The mood created by his mostly entirely suitable sounds and themes is often overlooked, but watch a BBC Video release and you can feel the eerie mood enhanced by his music. The complete absence of this in the '80s seriously damaged the impact of the programme in general and storylines in particular. What replaced it? Often inappropriate foreground music which often served only to disturb the concentration and detract from the action - the reverse of it's intention - composed by people with less skill and experience than Simpson, but ultimately, again, approved by JNT.

The '80s was a case of too many Doctors and too few producers. As has been pointed out elsewhere, the last decade would or could have been more successful with three producers and one Doctor. The BBC clearly did not seem to inform JNT when the quality of his work was failing. Perhaps the only sources he had to judge how he was doing was the viewing figures and the often conflicting letters from the fans. Many stories turned out comparatively dull because he removed the humour but did not seem to replace it with anything else, except his appallingly-miscast "guest" comedy cameos! In Season 22 he blatantly ignored the N.V.A.L.A. and introduced gratuitous violence, perhaps as a result of being tired of being in an impossible situation, perhaps hopeful of being moved on as Hinchcliffe had been.

Much has been said of the "Doctor Whooligan" character portrayed by Colin Baker. His miscasting was compounded with usually violent stories and gratuitous violence which reached a head when the Doctor murdered Shockeye when in the past he would either have restrained him or simply knocked him out. He wasn't that serious a threat, certainly not enough to kill (ironically this storyline was by the best of who writers Robert Holmes, perhaps responding too literally to the new dislikeable character of the Doctor).

The hiatus ensued, but instead of changing the Doctor, the writers or the production team, the programme returned with the heavily-subdued, illogical and poor Season 23. Many people I know were hoping the programme would end for good when the Doctor faced his "ultimate foe"! In a blaze of publicity Colin Baker, not JNT, was sacked, and Sylvester McCoy was the next actor to be (mis)cast as the Doctor. Not an actor with any kind of track record in drama and lacking the screen presence evidenced in previous Doctors, McCoy also possessed a way of delivering lines which made him sometimes incomprehensible to follow or to believe in. Saddled with Bonnie Langford and some of the most childish scripts a Doctor has ever been lumbered with for his debut, he nevertheless rose above this and appeared an altogether changed man in Season 25, aided by the best companion in recent years. Season 26, also much improved, failed to lure back the viewing public, ending the decade on an all time low ratings-wise.

My comments in DWB/81 still stand. I do believe that the '80s will be looked back on detrimentally in favour of the '60s and '70s, which is the crux of what I was saying. I don't like to criticise Doctor Who, but when I see a fine example of modern kid's drama doing for modern kids what Doctor Who used to do, I know that it isn't simply the times-a-changing or the show evolving that has made me dislike it; it is a falling of standards, a reversion to lowest common denominators, a strong hint of money over entertainment, that makes me saddened and unimpressed with '80s Who. I have little respect for the N.V.A.L.A. who I believe threw the first stone and started the sequence of events that has ultimately devastated Doctor Who's style, popularity and success. When I imagine what might have been in the '80s...

Mark Saunders

DEFENDING 'The Twin Dilemma'

"OKAY, so who'd like to go next?...Anyone?...How about you, have you spoken out and confessed yet? No? I think you'd better if this group therapy is going to work, don't you? Go on then."

"Er...good morning group...I came here because...to say...I...I...I quite appreciated...enjoyed even...that story..."

"Well?"

"The...um...The Twin Dilemma! I ENJOYED THE TWIN DILEMMA!!!"

That's right. I've come out of the closet and I'm confident enough to defend my opinions. Andrew Curnow's admirable (but misguided) defence of Delta and the Bannermen (with free slugging of Pyramids of Mars, totally gratis and without price, how generous) in DWB/81 has inspired me to express my opinions about story 6S. I didn't actually see this until after it's transmission (along with a few consecutive Colin Baker adventures - why is a long story), but when I did I liked it, and what's more I find it hard to appreciate the motives behind the portion of fandom who voted it the worst story ever in DWB/69.

About the time of viewing I had the pleasure to read comments made about the story again - and a good example of way over the top and narrow-minded (as far as he was concerned, Colin Baker's tenure was pure violence) deprecation is Anthony Howe's view of Season 22, published in DWB's Anniversary Special (#61). I find him guilty of disgraceful pretension. He states that the condition of "regeneration trauma", the reason behind the sixth Doctor's erratic behaviour, "is really related to memory loss" - but at no time has any story dismissed the possibility of a severe case, such as the sixth Doctor's. According to Howe, however, "it cannot be an excuse for attempted murder!" Gosh, he really knows his stuff doesn't he? Perhaps a passing Time Lord told him all about it.

Personally I find this unpredicable streak in Colin's debut performance as the Doctor a good excuse for him to 'spread his wings' and show off his acting ability (especially in the opening TARDIS-bound scenes). One of the problems, as far as I can see (as regards to fans like Howe) is that this change, although not for the worse, was traumatic itself, and perhaps a bit of a jolt - from 'sweet' Peter Davison to Colin Baker all in one season. I suppose the gothicy Caves of Androzani and the much-hyped advent of Colin Baker left a lot of fans expecting more of the same (quintessential Doctor Who, as many fans believed). Perhaps it was because I had seen the reviews etc. before I saw the stories that I was more receptive to his character and that kind of story.

Another point Howe made concerned the ratings drop at the time of broadcast. Well, if quality of stories is reflected in ratings, The Curse of Fenric must be worse than a slow drive past a sewage works in a Skoda! Really, and we've all done it haven't we, this reasoning is about as logical as saying that if wood floats, all that floats is wood (oops, bit of Monty Python there for such fans) - decide for yourself. He also continually refers to Doctor number six as 'Doctor Wholigan'. Very witty, Mr.Howe, full marks and Alpha-plus.

All in all he seems to be suffering from a case of meanyitis, a strong repulsion to distasteful events on Doctor Who. Anything with a content of unsavoury behaviour is "sick", "vicious", etc., etc., etc. This is the crux of his argument (or rather crusade) against the sixth Doctor - quite obviously a Doctor capable of murder (even if it is due to an unstable regeneration caused by poison) is a concept ahead of it's time.

The plot of this controversial tale is pretty elementary. It isn't particularly original, but The Twin Dilemma is a character (relationship) strong story so the mediocre ideals are forgivable (and anyway, I've seen worse - e.g. The Seeds of Doom - a tepid plot but a classic of the highest rank). The dialogue is mostly brilliant ranging from the humorous, tongue in cheek/self parody to the charged and dramatic. It's fairly well known that this adventure was largely rewritten by Eric Saward, and it certainly has a rewritten feel.

The Doctor's post-regeneration shock is greatly interesting to observe as we get to know this character in a variety of moods and dispositions. Unfortunately some of the most striking factors in a story are used, in this case badly. I refer to the presentation. Chunks of public turned off when they saw wobbly sets and that thing that resembled a minimalist's pinball table covered in tin foil and liberally decorated with lightning flashes cut out of sugar paper. Costumes were also fairly cheapo and the music was chronically drippy. Thank god an excellent structure and mostly perfect performances saved the show from predominant tackiness.



- PAUL VYSE -

Actually tastelessness suits this story quite well in a way, in keeping with the colourful and glamorous look of most of the other Colin Baker stories - this mix and use of visuals was successful most of the time. Tackiness may not work in a different context but you shouldn't judge a story by a different story's criteria - a mistake a lot of fans made. And after all, if Doctor Who was all gloss and sheen it just wouldn't be the same. Still, these factors admittedly could have been less open to criticism given a bigger budget (or a more wisely spent one?).

The story's main strength is it's movement. It never gets boring, yet physical action is low on the ground. Dramatic action is rife, though, and this is what gets the script together. This, along with the moments of self parody (perhaps too subtle a form of light relief for those who immediately assume such occurrences to be clichés) make the flow practically spotless. And all of this smoothness is carried along beautifully by the main performances.

The Doctor is the instigator of a lot of the humour and drama, all done extremely well with that gripping underline of unpredictability. Nicola Bryant's Peri seldom whinges, in fact most of the time she desperately tries to keep the Doctor under control. And even though she doesn't seem to care for her companion's new form, she is understandably upset when it appears that he is dead at the end of episode one - all the emotional trauma she has suffered leads up to this moment when we realise what Peri must have been going through.

As for the non-residential cast, the lieutenant is a mere story device and no-one tries to present him as anything else - least of all the actor. If the case was different it would have been ostentatious. The twins are obviously objects of the 'theatrical in-humour' I mentioned before. They spoke in unison and in plural ("we" instead of "I") frequently. On top of this they are named Romulus and Remus after the mythical founders of Rome. This is so over-typical that it has just got to be a joke, and I found myself laughing at them all the time! Mestor, on the other hand, was sadly average. He had no decent lines, and even though he wiggled his arms in an admittedly silly way he was one of the few standard (if you can call a talking slug standard) characters. Azrael was played by the distinguished Maurice Denham with consummate ease, but even so his character is pretty bland and two-dimensional - in the much-maligned death scene his performance is fudged by the dreadful music which turns it into another (yet reeking of lost potential) joke.

The Twin Dilemma is a good example of writer/director empathy. Peter Moffat saw the humour as well as the thrill and tension, and directed accordingly. It's a shame that the public and many fans just saw a glimpse of what appeared to be a bad programme and switched off. The Twin Dilemma is a very funny adventure, packed with bitingly intelligent humour (and even if this self parody I see is unintentional, it is there to be seen and enjoyed). Yet it is also action-packed, intense and exciting with brilliant acting from the regular cast overcoming the technical faults in presentation.

Even if you disagree with the points I have made I find it hard to believe that nobody could find it even watchable. It was simply the misfit of Season 21 which nobody wanted to review with retrospect or understanding. See it again and you may be pleasantly surprised...

Christopher Cox

ZINE ZONE

PETER D. LINFORD CASTS A CRITICAL EYE OVER SOME OF THE RECENT AMATEUR 'DOCTOR WHO' PUBLICATIONS



Top of the pile is issue four of Fan Mail (see advert this issue), boldly proclaiming that it is "still only £2.50" and sporting a jolly nice cover painting by Philip Robinson to herald the magazine's comic strip adaption of Tomb of the Cybermen, which is actually rather good.

Elsewhere in the 'zine it is difficult to tell what kind of market it is aiming at, and one is never quite sure whether they are being serious or facetious. In fact, it might be best if Neil Johnson and co. decided to become one or the other. For example, the reasonably serious review of TellyCon'90 sits unhappily alongside the (fairly pointless) satirical strip 'Duck in Durham'. Likewise the wonderfully cynical 'Fan Mail Data Bank' and the inimitable Paul Ferry column 'Bottlefield' was good, though, as were the pseudo news stories.



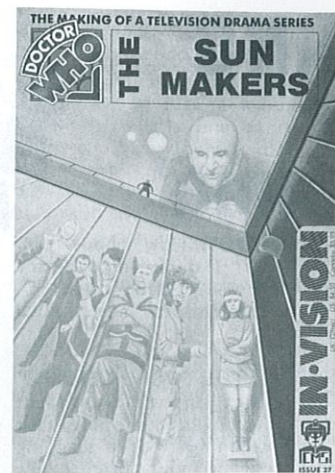
The recently resurrected Skaro (issue 2 - see advert in DWB#81 for issue one - price and ordering information is the same) leads with a Colin Baker interview which predictably treads familiar ground. The Jon Pertwee interview is better. Better still is the Frankenstein

article. It is noticeable these days that Doctor Who fanzines are beginning to follow DWB's example and branching into other realms. The reason is not hard to discern. As Private Who discovered to their cost, devoting a fan magazine entirely to Doctor Who in this era of uncertainty, especially one which depends on current production to form the bulk of its content, is very unwise. The trick is to branch out or face going under. A couple of new multi-media fanzines - Brave New World and Purple Haze - produced by people who are essentially Doctor Who fans, will be coming out toward the end of the year. It will be interesting to see how they fare.

This issue of Skaro is sort of billed as an 'oddball' with reviews of Who stories that might fit that category. Tucked away amidst these is a splendid oddball article by well known fan writer Pail Corned, in which he puts various story titles through his WP Spellcheck program and sees what comes out of the other end, viz Willing Harness' 'The Celebrity Toddler'.

All that lets the new Skaro down is its appearance. The covers are brilliant, a welcome change from the style of artwork that currently prevails in Who-zines (none of your boring old colourwashes), but inside the constant change of typeface looks awful.

In-Vision (advertised this issue) meanwhile, now pre-headed "the making of a television drama series", has reached Robert Holmes' The Sun Makers and is much what anyone who has seen it before would expect; carefully



researched, highly detailed and badly printed (though nowhere near as bad as Fan Mail's unreadable Sophie Aldred interview). If you really want to know the VT numbers of each of the four episodes, or that episode four began transmission at eight minutes and twenty-five seconds past six and ran for twenty-four minutes and fifty-seven seconds, then this is for you, though £2 still seems an awful lot for a publication of only sixteen pages, no matter how good it is.

Our friends at the poll-winning The Frame (see back page) have come up with a jolly weeze and published a "Best of issues 1 to 3", on the grounds that their first three issues are now unavailable and much sought after (which may well be true). Anyway, it all looks very good, and since DWB has been planning a similar sort of thing since the year dot one shouldn't really be cynical about it. Exactly



whose judgment it is that this is "the best" is unclear, but this is quite justified with the inclusion of their lengthy Christopher Barry interview, a shorter one with Victor Pemberton, a tribute to Patrick Troughton and space-filling 'Behind the Scenes' photographs from Barry's The Daemons and The Savages.

Of late Doctor Who fanzines have split into two decidedly different camps. On the one side we have the glossy, almost publication-standard range, and on the other the love-driven shoestring budget pack. What Fan Mail and to a lesser extent Skaro appear to do is to retain the essence of a 'quintessential' (ie: A5 and photocopied) fanzine within a semi-professional (ie: A4 and glossy) fanzine exterior. Whether the barrier can successfully be crossed remains to be seen. It depends what you're after, but don't be fooled.

Peter F D Linford

ISSUE 4
NEW LOOK: FULL COLOUR, 100% GLOSSY

Starts this issue:
TOMB - The graphic novelisation

Plus: FM Poll Results, FM Tips, DataBank, Sophie Interview II, DWM Werewolf Shock, Unseen Stories, Dr Duck in 'Bottlefield', The Prof, Quatermass and the Pit, Paul Ferry, UNIT Hotline, T.O.T., and lots more

Only £2-50 (payable to Neil Johnson) from FanMail, 12 Lichfield Close Great Lumley, Chester-le-st Co. Durham, DH3 4QH

Issues 1, 2, 3, and Summer Special still available for only £1-20 each

ST NG TOPS BBC2 RATINGS

THE BBC's screening of 'Star Trek - The Next Generation' has got off to a splendid start, regularly topping the BBC2 ratings chart.

Encounter at Farpoint was the top-rated BBC2 show during its week of broadcast with 5.07m, with The Naked Now second at 3.94m and Code of Honor back on top with 4.38m, notably better than Doctor Who managed at its later BBC1 slot this time a year ago although it was up against far tougher opposition.

The lack of stereo will not have affected many viewers (see last issue), but the loss of six minutes from Farpoint is a much greater disappointment. The version purchased for broadcast in this country was the two-episode edition which Paramount edited down for repeat screenings in America. The BBC re-edited them back together unaware that there was a longer version available. However, things may be put right for any repeats as the BBC are obtaining new stereo masters that could include the full version of the pilot.

SEASON 4 SET TO PLEASE

Season four looks set to please the fans. \$2 million was spent on the season opener, much of which went on building about 40 new miniatures which will make Federation space look a lot busier than it has done in the past. The season has the potential of creating several classic episodes, and Future Imperfect - to be broadcast on November 10th - could well be one of them. It concerns Riker getting knocked unconscious on an away team mission and waking up 15 years into the future. He discovers amongst other things that he now commands the Enterprise, he is going grey, and that LaForge has lost his visor! Another Spock's Brain or another Yesterday's Enterprise? Time will tell. A more disturbing piece of information is that a story is in the works to bring together Q and Lwaxana Troi - horrors!! Finally Charles Cooper, who played the Klingon general in Star Trek V and then the corrupt head of the Klingon High Council at Worf's trial in Sins of the Fathers, will be returning in the latter rôle.

The principle concern now is that once again there has been a major shake-up in the writing staff with Melinda Snodgrass, Richard Manning and Hans Beimler all departing. This leaves Michael Piller more completely in charge of scripting than anyone has been for a long time. Hopefully the rest of the fourth season will live up to the several excellent stories he produced last season.

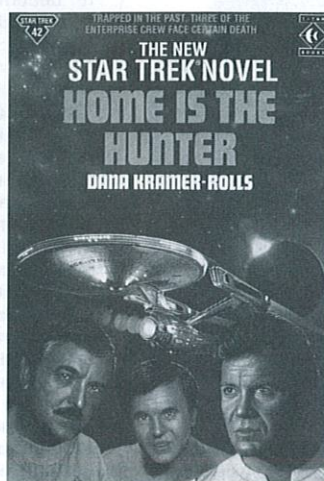
SEASON 4 LINE-UP

The schedule for season four so far has been: Best of Both Worlds(22/9), Family(29/9), Brothers(6/10), Suddenly Human(13/10), Remember Me(20/10), Legacy(27/10), Reunion(3/11), Future Imperfect(10/11), Final Mission(17/11). There will then be some repeats before the season resumes with The Loss.

STVI SCRIPT PROPOSAL

Nicholas Meyer, responsible for Star Trek II, turned in a script for Star Trek VI on October 15th. It remains to be seen if it is accepted, but the betting is that it will.

TITAN SCHEDULE



NO 'STNG' RELEASE in December, but Titan Books do publish Star Trek novel 42, Home is the Hunter, on the 12th priced £2.99.

The schedule for the first half of 1991 is (Jan)Demons by J M Dillard, (Feb)Ghost Walker by Barbara Hamby, (Mar)Mutiny on the Enterprise by Robert E Vardeman, (Apr)A Flag Full of Stars by Brad Ferguson, (May)Crisis on Centaurus by Brad Ferguson, (Jun)Renegade by Gene Dewese and (Jul)Triangle by Sondra Marshak & Myrna Culbreath.

New STNG novels include Fortune's Light by Michael Jan Friedman in January and Contamination by John Vornholt in March. All the above are priced at £2.99.

Finally another 'giant novel' is planned for next April: Battlegrounds by Diane Carey priced at £3.99.

*Apologies to Kathleen Toth for last issue's paste-up error concerning the Data portion of her STNG guide, and also for the misspelling of "Gallic"

BLAKE'S 7 REVIVAL

BBC VIDEO are to release the entire series of Blake's 7 in an unedited format, beginning on January 7th 1991 with the following (two episodes per tape):

THE WAY BACK/SPACE FALL (no.4447)
CYGNUS ALPHA/TIME SQUAD (no.4448)
THE WEB/SEEK-LOCATE-DESTROY (no.4449)
MISSION TO DESTINY/DUEL (no.4450)

The BBC are also poised to release two Doomwatch and one Adam Adamant video in 1991, which looks like being a very eventful year indeed for the telefantasy fan...

QUATERMASS AT THE N.F.T.

The clock was turned back 35 years at the National Film Theatre on October 24th when, as part of a season titled 'Rudolph Cartier - TV Drama Pioneer', the original BBC serial Quatermass II was screened to a packed house.

As part of his introduction for the six episodes, Quatermass creator and writer Nigel Kneale, now a sprightly 68, told of how he felt the story echoed the public's mistrust of governmental bureaucracy and suspicion surrounding new towns and secret military installations at the time. He went on to disclose that the Cartier-produced serial was filmed in an area called Muckin Marshes - a name he perhaps wisely changed to Winderden Flats.

Behind the scenes information included his light-hearted annoyance that the designers apparently overspent on the early part of the serial leaving the ending looking distinctly threadbare. An example of this, he claimed, is that bootstraps are clearly visible holding together the astronauts' spacesuits in episode six! Further information on this television milestone could be gleaned by reading the NFT's programmes notes - reprinted from an article Kneale wrote for the Radio Times in October 1955. The talk ended when he expressed his doubts that the BBC would ever release the story on videotape as he believed "it just doesn't come up to the visual standards expected by today's cassette owners."

Of special interest to Who fans amongst the mostly middle-aged audience was the appearance of Roger Delgado as journalist Hugh Conrad in episode four. This, probably the finest of the six, retained it's original warning that the BBC did not consider it "suitable for children or those of a nervous disposition."

Although the age, some of the acting and the production standards displayed raised a few laughs, the audience was mostly spellbound throughout. However the closest Nigel Kneale came himself to expressing a preference for any of the pioneering science fiction tales came after the screening when I mentioned the third story, Quatermass and the Pit. "Ah yes," he replied, "That was the one without the bootstraps!"

Marcus Hearn

BRIEFLY...

AN INDEPENDENT video facilities house has just completed work on striking new 625-line masters of all the existing Blackman Avengers episodes. It is expected that C4 will start transmission some time early in the new year.

Anthony Clark

SUPERCAR and The Tomorrow People make their video debuts on two tapes just released by Watershed Pictures. The series is entitled The Best Children's TV of the Decade, and if you are prepared to endure the presenter Philip Schofield then you will be delighted at the feast of clips comprising material from both the BBC and ITV.

The first volume, The 60's (cat.no.WSP 1012) includes clips from Thunderbirds, Fireball XL5 and Supercar, while The 70's features excerpts from Captain Scarlet (which actually premiered in 1968!), The Tomorrow People and Worzel Gummidge (cat.no.WSP 1013).

Volume three, covering the 80's, is still in the planning stages, but it has already been confirmed that it will carry clips from Joe 90 (first broadcast in 1968!!) and 70's favourite The Basil Brush Show, the programme that, for a whole generation, meant that Doctor Who was only half an hour away...

Ashley Fisher

THE BIGGEST SURPRISE of the young Fall season on American television is the new series called The Flash. Based on a synthesis of the three separate comic series that have featured the speedy superhero, it sounded like a surefire loser and was pitched into an "impossible" timeslot opposite Cosby and The Simpsons. But what promised to be a callous attempt to cash in on the Batman craze has thus far proven to be a stylish evocation of the elements that made the Burton film so popular.

Warner Brothers is spending a record amount of money per episode for stunning special effects, and a costume that does not look ridiculous - no mean feat for a guy dressed in scarlet with little gold lightning bolts on his head! Danny Elfman, who did the Batman score, provides a similar theme for The Flash (perhaps too similar) and John Wesley Shipp supplies the right amount of angst as the laboratory researcher turned into a speeding bullet by an accident. Amanda Pays plays a sympathetic scientist working at a rather sinister research centre who tries to help him control his powers.

If The Flash cannot outrun the established sitcoms he is up against, CBS will have to give serious thought to finding a different time-slot rather than dumping such a promising series.

Kathleen Toth

CASHING IN on the lucrative Christmas market and the success of M.C.Parker last summer is this FAB LP containing remixes of up to 15 ITC cult series plus Weintraub's The Avengers.

Released on the Telstar label, Power Themes 90 (cat.no.Star 2430) should be in your local Our Price now!!



RICHARD O'BRIEN

RICHARD O'BRIEN, CREATOR AND STAR OF 'THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW' AND LATTERLY 'THE CRYSTAL MAZE', RECENTLY TOOK TIME OFF TO TALK TO ROBERT COPE FOR D.W.B. AT THE MOLINARE SOUND STUDIOS OFF LONDON'S REGENT STREET...

Robert Cope: Going back to August '88 when the path to the new West End production of 'The Rocky Horror Show' started, you demanded that the Theatre Royal in Hanley, Stoke on Trent, halt their record-breaking four-year tour of 'Rocky'. Why didn't you like it?

Richard O'Brien: Basically the production values were very low. They had a few lasers, so what? The band tried their best but there was no one in control saying "let's get more" and trying to keep the whole thing together. What's good about the new one is that we've got Richard Hartley (N.B. composer of the score for Doctor Who's Mindwarp in 1986) on board who's not only the arranger but he's also the 'ear' out front, so we have a musical director playing with the band but he can't be in two places at once! If you are going to do a show it's essential that the production values are high and to get it right. I hated the set for the Hanley tour - those painted canvas backdrops were ghastly, I would have burned them. It was cheap and shoddy and smacked of amateur night out. As the tour went on the casting got sloppier and sloppier (some of it wasn't that good in the first place)!

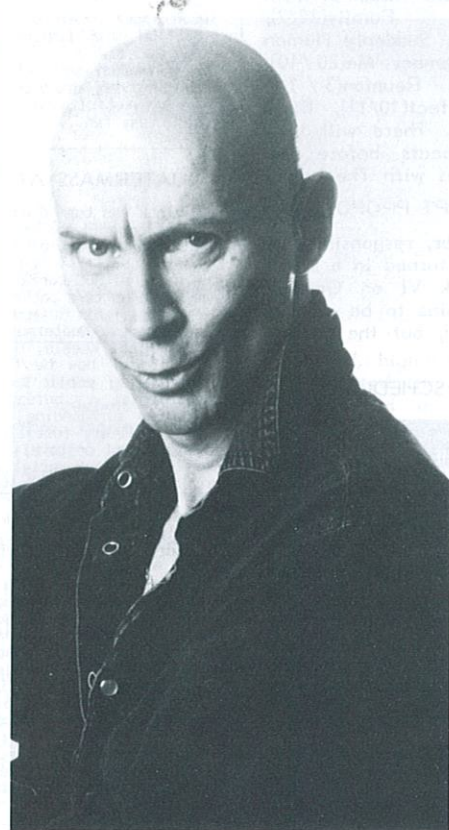
I thought the tour, when it started, was a good show, but when the lasers came into it it went downhill rapidly...

They were also casting young and relatively inexperienced people and they allowed the audience to take over who have caused as many problems for us as anything else. Of course audiences want to shout out now that's established - and it was established well before Hanley - but Hanley turned it into a f*****g pantomime. I went to see it at the Bristol Hippodrome and they actually did "Oh yes it is...Oh no it's not...". I think, therefore, if you have wit on stage and strength - which comes from playing and experience - you can control it and the audience appreciates it more. They're like children, they know where they stand. It sounds terribly patronising to audiences, but it's true; if you go to see Barry Humphries, for instance, you appreciate the fact that he's in charge.

You daren't even breathe when he's on stage...

Absolutely, just you try saying anything! So after deciding it must close, was it a smooth path to the opening of the new 'Rocky'?

No, no, no. It's taken us probably 18 months to get it all together. We also had to sit down and ask what we originally had with Rocky in the very first production. What were the elements that made it work? It's difficult to define and we didn't want to slavishly copy what we had done before (it would be like getting all the people to come back to a second party - you just cannot recreate the spontaneity that made it work first time around), so it was a question of finding out all the things that we felt made it work and not re-create it but adjust it. One of the



things we did put our finger on was the chemistry of the players when we first did it, but it wasn't a question of finding clones of those actors but discovering a cast who would work well enough together to create a new chemistry if you like, but equally into a trap of saying it must be different (that would be as perverse and stupid). In the end I think we got the mix right.

Is it your production financially?

No.

How much input did you have then?

Well, it's produced by two people. Independent Theatre Productions and Viva Productions have come together to form 'Rocky Horror London Ltd.' and they are



PHOTOS

(Above) Richard O'Brien with (left to right) Tim Blackadder, Edmondson, and Gina Bellman, (opposite page) The West End version of 'The Rocky Horror Show' and Richard O'Brien in his 'Crystal Maze' guise (copyright Lynne Kirwin Associates and Channel 4).

putting it on, they are the producers and it's their show. I, however, am a director of a company called 'Rocky Horror Ltd.' so if we like the London version we can then say we'd like to move it further on (i.e. take it on tour, take it to Europe etc.), so we can oversee everything in a first class professional way. The amateur rights and repertory rights are already with publishers Samuel French Ltd. but if anyone wants to do it on the continent we want to know how they are going to do it and offer them a package, that is to say an artistic team. Don't get me wrong, the show is a piece of trash, but it's a piece of trash lovingly put together. If you play it as trash or take it too lightly that's all it becomes, but if you take it seriously and build all the component parts it's a nice piece of trash. There is a difference between trash that is knowing and that which is unknowing!

You've taken some risks with actors in the new version, it isn't obvious casting.

Again it's all down to comparisons. Casting Tim McInnerny is a risk. It's always a risk with Tim every night because he's not a singer and it's an area he hasn't been involved in before. He doesn't have any experience in that area but that's quite nice, that risk every night, and it prevents comparisons. We had an awful lot of people wanting to audition for us, for the understudy parts and things, and they gave us clone-like renditions of Tim Curry and myself.

What staggers me about 'Rocky Horror' is the atmosphere in the theatre - it's like nothing else I've ever encountered...

It's probably what theatre used to be like before it became church like and precious. Victorians took a lot of life away from us...

...Except music hall...

Yes, but that was looked upon as low life. Rocky is closer to pre-Victorian days of theatre than anything else. There are concerts of course, but you don't get that interaction between audience and performer. They take the adulation but it's all for them, very narcissistic. I've been playing Frank because Tim (McInnerny) has been ill and one night when Rocky tells Frank to piss off, instead of turning on Rocky I turned on the audience. You can call an audience whatever you want to.

What did you call them pray tell?

I first of all called them "reprobates", then the next night "losers" then "deadbeats", and finally I was saying "Listen up, you load of f*****g deadbeats!" It's astonishing how much they'll take! I noticed as you enter the theatre there is a message from the author saying, basically, BEHAVE!!

No, no. I didn't want it to be parental - "The New York rules apply". I worked my arse off trying to get it right psychologically. Rocky fans say it's their right to shout out lines during the show (which I'm not going to argue about), but if so then the New York rules apply. Sal Piro (President of the International Rocky Horror Fan Club) always says "Our narrator has a neck and is definitely not boring, and anybody who says to the contrary is out OK?" So I thought that was the best way around that one. Truthfully, the lines they shout aren't that witty. One night whilst I was playing

Frank we had one guy in the full gear with his feet up on the back of the chair who was a f*****g bore to be honest, he was just so unfunny. Use wit, not shit, is my motto.

Adrian Edmondson came out best, I felt, with the audience interplay.

He always comes off stage and says of the audience "They are boring tonight, their timing's all wrong!" He's a comedian so who's to argue (laughs). He was asked during an interview recently, "Adrian, is this a show for the 90's?", he said "No, all ages!" which I thought was funny.

There is supposed to be another 'Rocky Horror' sequel movie soon isn't there?

Yes, 'Revenge of the old Queen'...in fact I'm supposed to be hearing about that soon. It's Rocky fifteen years on.

How many of the old characters do you want it to feature?

I'm not getting into that. It's like baking a cake; if you set out to bake the cake with the same ingredients it will turn out pretty much the same.

Will it be along the lines of your first sequel, 'Shock Treatment'?

Shock Treatment is a disaster. The soundtrack of the film is great; if you listen to it you'll realise the potential the film could have had. We got sidetracked by the director Jim Sharman, who must take complete responsibility. We should have kept to the first draft, but Jim said he didn't want to do more of the same at which point we should have said "Fine, go and make the kind of films you want to make and we'll carry on with the first draft!" God knows why we didn't. The new script disregards Shock Treatment in a way; when Shock Treatment comes into it it will be pretty much like Bobby's shower in Dallas.

All a dream?

Yes!

Do you think you'll be in it?

Oh yes, Riff Raff will be in it. Basically Riff is a scapegoat, he takes all the blame. I think, in many ways, it's the best part, having now played Frank and Riff. He's the one who does all the work whilst Frank wanders around sipping champagne, smoking joints and f*****g people. Meanwhile Riff is the one actually doing the experiments that make Rocky and that is the undercurrent to the character, certainly when I was playing it. Frank steals all Riff Raff's glory.

The best Riff I ever saw was an actor called Keith Burns...

I very much like our current Riff, Edward



Tudor-Pole. He's as mad as a hatter, wonderfully so.

You appeared in a production of 'Little Shop of Horrors', a show I think that was heavily influenced by Rocky?

I think we were the original in that genre, yes. That doesn't mean to say that nobody else should have a crack at it; it's rock 'n' roll theatre basically. The reason I did 'Little Shop' was that I saw it in the West End and thought it could have been cast and directed better as an entertaining evening. Harry Towb played Mushnik and, like a lot of Jewish people, refused to play a cliché. I see nothing wrong in playing a cliché; there is a truth in all stereotypes - they don't pluck them out of thin air. I think we should milk the comedy potential out of them as much as possible. Maureen Lipman doesn't go far enough with her Jewish grandmother (Beattie). I just objected to Harry Towb walking through it, trying to avoid the stereotype and not being funny, so when I did it I tried to play up that side of things and my Jewish friends loved it. It's the same with Jonathan Pryce and this business of Miss Saigon where American Equity won't let him play an Asian - it's make believe for goodness sake! An actor can be what he wants in his make believe world. If the part was a one-legged Canadian does that mean we've got to search Canada for a one-legged actor? It's all nonsense. Would Lan ping Yun be funnier than Peter Sellers as Dr. Fu Man

Chu? I think not.

You did 'Robin of Sherwood' didn't you?

Yes, I played Gurnar the Sorcerer. I did two double episodes and a single episode. That was great fun except for the single episode. The director was a p*** artist and mean-spirited - a pain in the a'se I thought. He had no sense of humour and was completely...

Moderation is not your strongest point is it?

No, I'm afraid not.

Are you doing a new 'Rocky' cast album by the way?

Yes and no. We are doing an album and it will feature the current cast, but we're calling it 'The Rocky Horror Record Show'. We are doing it now; it'll be like a Radio 4 play with all the dialogue plus the songs in which the sound effects - like the clinking of bottles or scrunching of paper - are all dreadfully accentuated.

Now you are becoming known for the wonderful 'Crystal Maze'. Why did you decide to do it, because it is different?

I did it because I thought I should raise the profile. I've had 20 years of success but nobody really knew who I was, and there are advantages as well as disadvantages to that, but I felt at my time of life I should do something to get my face known and in this country it's television that gets you recognition, or as the general public would call it "stardom".

Was that the sole reason?

No, I wanted to raise the profile for my charity work as well - it gives you more pulling power.

That's alcohol and drugs rehabilitation isn't it?

Yes. What I'd like to do is get all those people who enjoy an occasional drink to contribute something to those that are hooked on it and underwrite the treatment of those people so they can get back on their feet. I'm trying to persuade the producers of Rocky to do a midnight matinee in aid of the Chemical Dependency Centre in Redcliff Gardens, but it's complicated because front of house staff etc. still have to be paid, but we're working on it.

It would be nice to think that the many 'Rocky Horror' fans gathering up and down the country could raise a few bob for this good cause.

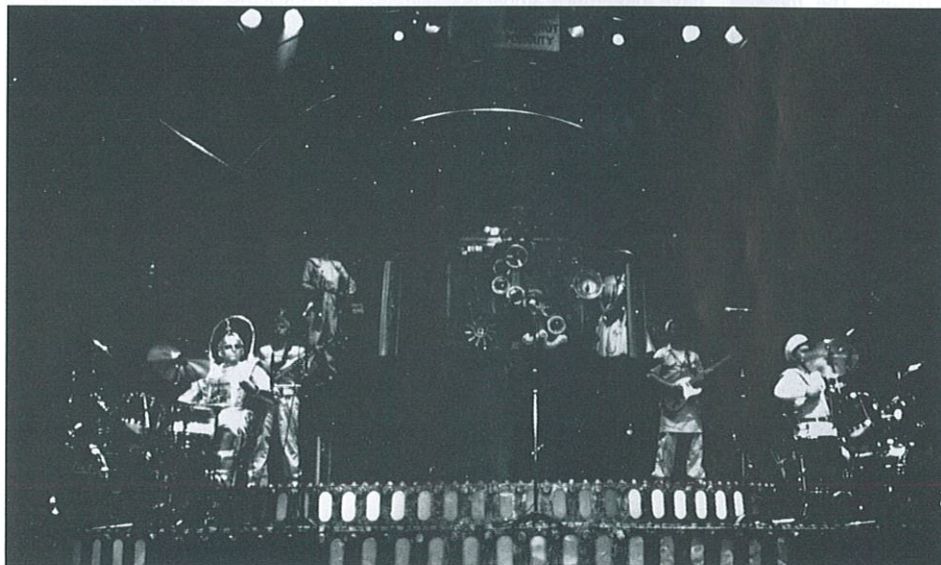
Oh yes, that's an area I very much want to get into. Rocky Horror fans cross so many boundaries - science fiction, rock 'n' roll, theatre buffs - you name it! If anyone would care to organise an evening in aid of 'Backup for C.D.C.' then I'd do my best to attend, if my commitments allow, to sing a few songs and tell a few jokes. Similarly if people want to donate money they can send it to me c/o The Piccadilly Theatre, London.

What does the future hold for Richard O'Brien then?

Well, I'm going to do a one-man show about Mephistopheles the demon. It'll be in two distinct halves; the first half will be the backing singers doing some rock 'n' roll songs I've written, then in the second half I arrive and they fade into the background as I take over their lives. It's something that has a lot of mileage in it I think, something I very much want to do and am going to do.

Richard O'Brien, thank you very much.

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW Box Office:
The Piccadilly Theatre,
Denman Street,
London W1V 8DY.
Tel: (071) 867 1118.
Ticket Prices: £10-20, Duration: 1½ hours.



GOING WHERE ONE HAS GONE BEFORE:

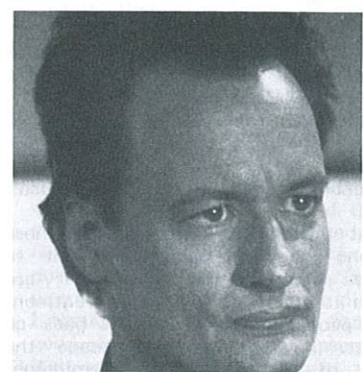
Three Years on *The Next Generation*

PART FOUR

THE ADVERSARIES: As already noted in this series of articles, the initial writers' guide explicitly forbade warfare with Klingons or Romulans. It also banned stories with Vulcans.

The reason was that Gene Roddenberry did not want to repeat himself. A few Vulcans have been seen in small supporting rôles, but the only major use of one prior to the recent Sarek was a Vulcan doctor in *Schizoid Man* who has been mentioned but not seen since. There is an alliance with the Klingons although little is said about its origins. Worf is the only Klingon in Starfleet. The Romulans are feared but have been silent for 50 years. *Neutral Zone* seemed to signal that they would return as major foes, but they were used very little in the second series. They are used to good effect in the third and have impressive looking new ships.

The first major new adversary was, of course, Q, who appeared twice in the first season and once in each of the next two years. He appears to be a virtually omnipotent but petulant being who



delights in tormenting the crew. Although he has some sort of regard for Riker, he continually mocks Picard and hurls insults at Worf ("Macrohead, growl so I'll know you missed me"). Many fans have pointed out that Q is not all that new, bearing a more than passing resemblance to Trelane from the original series. However, John de Lancie has made the part entirely his own. His major concern these days is that Q is getting too lovable and he would prefer a return to the

more threatening Q of the first season. However, the last two Q stories, in which he was actually trying to persuade the Captain to let him join the crew, were so enjoyable that it seems unlikely that he can return to the nastier Q of old. It is surely bad enough that he has unleashed the Borg on his "friend" Picard and it is unlikely that he could be used to rectify that little error.

While Q has been a success, the other new villains of the first season, the Ferengi, hit the screen with a resounding thud. Built up as the next great adversary for the Federation, they were totally non-threatening, appearing as dwarfish buffoons mesmerized by money (which is interesting in itself as the guides tell us that neither money nor material want any longer exist in the Federation). Although several people connected with the series said that they would not appear again after the first season, they have been back but they are now used for comedic purposes. The most threatening thing about them is that their appearance seems to be that of characters found in German expressionist films of Fritz Lang. That, plus the fact that Data's child is a ringer for the Golem, suggests the infiltration of film school graduates into the studio, or else everyone just studies *Blade Runner* to get the ideas second hand. The one great Ferengi contribution to galactic culture has never really been stressed on the series, although given some play in the books. According to the guides the Ferengi introduced 'synthelol', which is what is served in Ten Forward rather than alcohol. The virtue of synthelol is that it produces the same effect but the symptoms of intoxication can be thrown off at will and there is no hangover. The 24th century is paradise after all.

If the Ferengi did not work, the other new threat in the first season that most certainly did were the mysterious parasites found infiltrating Starfleet in *Conspiracy*. Actually, this story was originally supposed to be

about a genuine conspiracy headed by disgruntled Starfleet officers who wanted war with the Klingons or just about anybody to shake-up a decadent Federation. That idea was unacceptable to the front office so the beasties from beyond were ushered in and given free reign to horrify in what was a conscious attempt to take advantage of the greater freedom afforded by syndication. The same pushing at the boundaries was seen in the areas of sex and language earlier in the season. The end of the episode left open the possibility of more creatures lurking out in the stars, and Melinda Snodgrass for one favoured the idea of bringing them back rather than the Borg, who have the disadvantage of being too powerful.

The Borg have been developed in precisely the way Patrick Stewart was suggesting early on that he would like to see stories develop, by letting things be suggested and connected up over a number of episodes. Their presence is hinted at in *Neutral Zone*, although no one knows who they are. They are then encountered the following year in *Q Who* and appear to be more powerful than anything the Federation can muster. They are humanoids who are connected in a sort of group mind and pursue a type of technologically-based civilisation that has them implanting cybernetic attachments into their bodies from birth. They are interested only in useable technologies and are unconcerned about other lifeforms. Their cube-shaped ships are the direct antithesis of the graceful galaxy class Enterprise which is the triumph of technology directed towards the enhancement of quality of life. When they appear on the Federation's doorstep earlier than expected at the end of the third season, it should lead to the ultimate test of the survivability of human culture in a suddenly hostile universe. It is difficult to see (sic) any easy resolution that will be believable, even if a Romulan alliance might be in the offing now that the mutual enemy of *The Neutral Zone* has been revealed.

The possibility that as many as eight episodes of the fourth season may be about the Borg threat would certainly represent a major change to an atmosphere of danger and crisis as opposed to a conception in which the primary mission is understood to be one of peaceful exploration. Picard will still be in the driver's seat, but there is the possibility of a recurring rôle for Commander Shelby, the officer who wants Riker's job in *The Best of Both Worlds*. She certainly made an impact as a sort of sophisticated Tasha Yar - very aggressive and challenging but doing it through command of science and office politics rather than martial arts.

PUZZLES AND MINUTAE

A number of the early first season episodes were rewritten to opt for more simplistic sexual themes over the original stories. This is particularly evident in *Naked Now*, *Justice* and *Code of Honour*. This was at least partly done to take advantage of the freedoms of syndication and to generate publicity. However, the logic of using *Naked Now* as the second telecast episode is particularly questionable as it seems that the revelations of the story would have had more impact if we had gotten to know the characters a bit first.

Continuity fans will also be aggrieved by how vague the circumstances and chronology of Jack Crusher's death remain. No specifics of how or why he died have ever been given. Nor is it clear exactly how long ago it happened, although it was while Picard commanded *Stargazer*. Yet when the vessel is unexpectedly found again in *The Battle* after Picard had been forced to abandon it years before, no reference is made to Beverly's husband at all. More puzzling is the fact that *Stargazer* is always talked about as Picard's immediately preceding command and the one that established his reputation through its 22-year mission of exploration on the edges of known space. Yet *The Battle* and *Measure of a Man* made it clear that *Stargazer* was damaged in battle and lost years ago, and Picard court martialed over the episode ten years before. What has he been doing in the last decade? This is a gap in logic on which the guides are utterly silent.

There is a similar puzzle with Guinan. Although *Ten Forward* is not seen until the second season, it is not treated as a new addition to the ship and everyone acts as though Guinan has been on board all along. Yet the fact that she and Tasha Yar never met is crucial to the plot of *Yesterday's Enterprise*...

Kathleen Toth

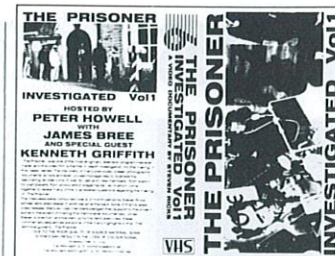
COMING SOON: The first part of our 'Star Trek - Next Generation' Season Four Episode Guide...

video review

Every so often there comes along a fan item which is a labour of love and has something new to say. This is such an item. Following in the footsteps of the Myth Makers videotapes and its imitators such as 'An Afternoon with Brian Clemens' from author Dave Rogers, this documentary - written by Prisoner aficionado Steven Ricks and Max Hora - breaks new grounds and gives the informed and detailed approach to covering the cult show which will enthral those fascinated in its production.

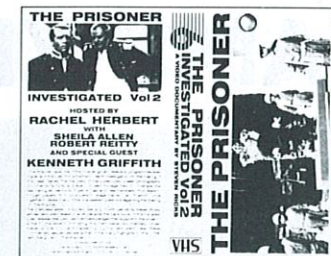
Although some of the camerawork and lighting is a bit shaky, the content shines through brilliantly. The development and production of *The Prisoner* is charted step by step and in chronological order from the initial concepts and the days of John Drake through to the bizarre explanations as to why the production company of Everyman Films went bust - and it's two never-completed productions.

To do this, Steve and his team have spent a year contracting over thirty people involved with the original series which covers actors and actresses both major and minor, assistant directors, producer David Tomblin, editors, musicians, casting directors, continuity girls,



designers...and all is woven together with rare unseen film plus 'rushes' for the series which have been tracked down and finally presented to all for the first time since 1967. This is all encapsulated extremely well in the finished product, which runs to over four hours in all.

The enthusiasm of those involved in the original series has also spilled over into the production, with several artistes happy to appear in person in a variety of locations associated with the show to deliver appropriate linking dialogue. Kenneth Griffith (Schnipps in *The Girl Who Was Death* and the President in *Fall Out*) handles the bulk of the first tape, striding around Portmeirion describing the early days of the show. Others who visit locales such as Beachy Head and GEC Borehamwood include Peter Howell (The Professor in *The General*), James Bree (Villiers in *Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling*), Sheila Allen (Number



14 in A, B and C) and Rachel Herbert (Number 58 in *Free For All*).

A lot of mysteries about this series are cleared up. Various people recount the problems with the unused Rover. Gerald Kelsey and Moris Farhi talk about the scripts which they wrote for George Markstein which were never used, and the reasons why they were abandoned. Actor David Arlen recounts the language lessons he was required to take for his small rôle in *The Chimes of Big Ben*. Attention to detail is very good and means that, as a whole, the documentary turns the books from both Dave Rogers and White/Alli into 'primers', leaving these two cassettes to deal with the nitty-gritty.

Equally as fascinating as the technical backgrounds are the stories recounted about the show's star and executive producer, Patrick McGoochan. McGoochan filled more than these two credited rôles and, from the recollections of those

who toiled on the episodes over the 1966-8 period, comes across as a very talented and dedicated man - yet one who at times was walking a razor sharp edge between genius and obsession. It is refreshing to see the story of the series told for a change by so many of the 'unsung heroes' of the day, many of whom will be familiar names from the days of those classic ITV series. Although people like McGoochan, Alexis Kanner and Don Chaffey all had their say on the show back on *Illumination's The Prisoner File* (shown by Channel 4 in January 1984), now we get the chance to hear from the likes of Mickey O'Toole, Terence Feely, Derren Nesbitt, Len Harris and many, many more with their views on this piece of television history.

For those of you who fancy something a little different in terms of video-recorded interviews, I can strongly recommend enquiring about these tapes at the address below (enclosing an SAE). The production may not be as glossy as those from the Myth Makers gang, but for dedicated fans of *The Prisoner* who thought there was nothing new to discover...well, buy the tapes, both beautifully packaged and presented in colour photo covers: Happy viewing!

Andrew Pixley

THE PRISONER INVESTIGATED

A VIDEO DOCUMENTARY BY STEVEN RICKS

Hosted by
PETER HOWELL
and
RACHEL HERBERT
with
SHEILA ALLEN
JAMES BREE
ROBERT RIETTY
and special guest
KENNETH GRIFFITH



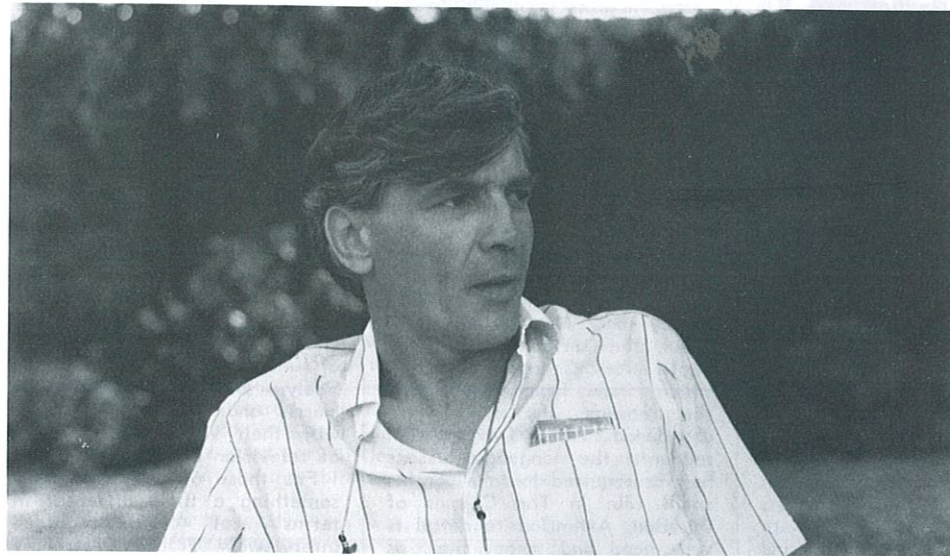
"The Prisoner" was one of the most enigmatic television programmes ever made, and this video film is the first in-depth investigation into the making of this classic series. The discovery of many previously unseen photographs, documents, scripts and even unused footage help to illustrate the fascinating recollections of over 30 cast and crew members - from stars to bit-part players; from producers to stage hands - all of whom come together to reveal many of the unanswered questions regarding the making of "The Prisoner". Many ex-cast members pledged their support to the project - some to the extent of hosting this memorable documentary, and these commentary sequences are some of the many highlights to this - THE definitive guide to "The Prisoner".

PRICE £19.95 + £1 p&p

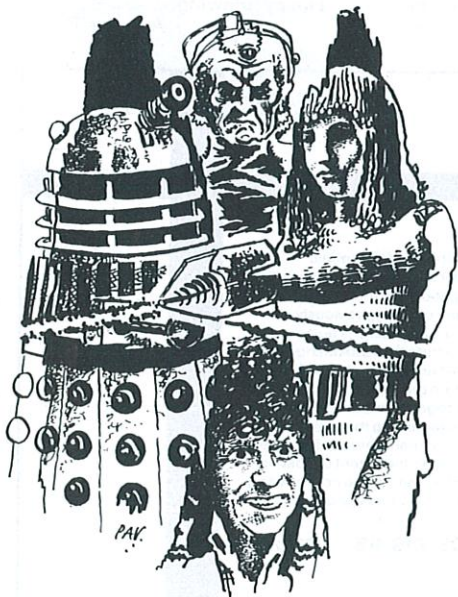
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THE WILLIAMS YEARS



Four years after their last appearance, the Daleks were returning. Strangely enough, it was not their reappearance that caught the attention of the press but the presence of Suzanne Danielle as one of the Beautiful People, as the Movellans were once called. But while we were waiting for DESTINY OF THE DALEKS, the series was about to fall off the knife edge that it had balanced on for the last two years...



Money has always been a problem in the DOCTOR WHO world. Indeed, the art of good DOCTOR WHO is to give the big budget look on a shoestring. But there is a limit, and with a large proportion of the season's funds paying for a trip to Paris, economies had to be made elsewhere. Like the rest of the season...

Unfortunately, this was not the only cloud. Although both Williams and Baker shared a desire to bring more humour to the programme, Williams leaned towards wit and satire, while Baker preferred straightforward slapstick. With the appointment of Douglas Adams as script editor, the humour acquired that peculiar undergraduate nature that typified MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS and HITCH HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY. But were

money and slapstick the only problems with DESTINY OF THE DALEKS?

Nation's original story relied heavily on the idea of death and the undead. The seeming resurrections of Romana, Davros and the Dalek race; the zombie-like Dalek slaves, desperate for the release of death; the Movellan undead, beautiful, but lifeless without the emotions needed to appreciate life. Filmed in darkness, the true horror of the Daleks' plight would have become apparent. So what happened? The story was made in daylight, effectively removing every trace of terror. The decision to alter the basic characteristics of the Daleks, and make them logical robots, betrayed sixteen years of the series - where was 'the Dalek factor'? The dark emotions engineered by Davros in GENESIS? Coupled with the tatty, decrepit casings, and the unbelievably ridiculous Romana regeneration, this served to make DESTINY a flop it didn't deserve to be.

Still, all the money had been spent on Paris for THE CITY OF DEATH, so that would be good, wouldn't it? Well, I know it won the DWAS Season Poll, but I tend to think that that was because of the competition, not its inherent quality. I can appreciate the good script; I can see the relatively high production values. But the slapstick spilled out and, for me, ruined the whole thing. Even actors of the calibre of Julian Glover were



overshadowed by Baker's excessive clowning, and by the more juvenile elements of the script.

CREATURE FROM THE PIT defies description. The plot is too simple to support four episodes; the villain of the piece, Adrasta, is a vicious cliché, a parody of the female enemies encountered in the series; and the creature itself is a phallic plastic bag. You cannot help but get the feeling that everything is hurtling downhill, and THE NIGHTMARE OF EDEN does nothing to halt the decline. The sets are cardboard, the Mandrells laughable, the acting of the lowest standard I can remember in the programme. Although the script had a few notable ideas - warp smash, the CET machine - these were lost in four weeks of utter bilge.

Behind the scenes, a BBC strike was making the production of SHADA, the final story, more and more difficult. By the time that THE HORNS OF NIMON was broadcast, SHADA was definitely out of the question. Williams had had enough of DOCTOR WHO, and had handed over his rôle to his production unit manager, John Nathan-Turner, after George Gallacio turned it down.

While the production team shuffled about, THE HORNS OF NIMON drew more criticism than almost any other story. Some of this may be due to the fact that the season was curtailed without the customary six-parter - HORNS was given an importance as season-closer that it was never intended to have. I like the story, and, although Graeme Crowden's acting lets the story down badly, most of the parts are well-played. Of course, I cannot divert criticism from the farting TARDIS sound effects, or the tottering, high-heeled Nimon itself. But it really doesn't deserve the annihilating reviews that it receives.

And so the Williams era ends, not with a bang, but a whimper. Many people have had the dubious pleasure of seeing SHADA. I don't share the view that it would have been a high point for Williams to bow out on. Indeed, I find it shares the faults that typified Season Seventeen: hammy acting and childish joking about. But Williams' era was slated for years afterwards as being a complete waste of time and money, an appalling interlude between Hinchcliffe and Nathan-Turner. Does this make Williams a bad producer?

Usually when anyone directs criticism at Graham Williams, it concerns Season Seventeen. But that was a season in which money was tight, the lead actor felt he had the right to play the fool both on and off the set, and the script editor wanted to inject his own brand of humour. Even the best producer would have had his hands full. Taken as a whole, the Williams era had a high proportion of classic stories. It would be a pity to tar all three seasons with the same critical brush.

Before Graham Williams' unfortunate death, he was to have one last encounter with the world of DOCTOR WHO. When Eric Saward was commissioning Season Twenty Three, one of the stories he wanted made was THE NIGHTMARE FAIR, a story set in Blackpool featuring the Celestial Toymaker's return after nearly twenty years. Of course, the original season fell through, but the story surfaced when W H Allen released it in their Missing Episodes series.

The book demonstrates a feel for the Sixth Doctor missing from the television portrayal, a depth of character that would have made Colin Baker's Doctor stand out. And, coupled with stories such as IMAGE OF THE FENDAHL and THE SUN MAKERS, it demonstrates that Graham Williams had a feel for DOCTOR WHO that few have given regard to. Perhaps one day more people will recognise the 'Forgotten Producer'.

Craig Hinton

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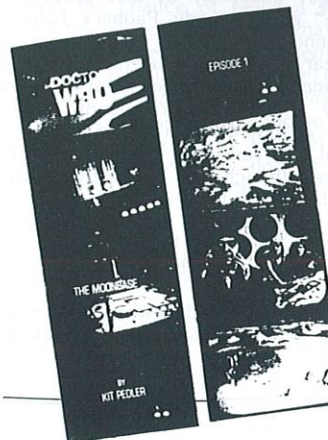
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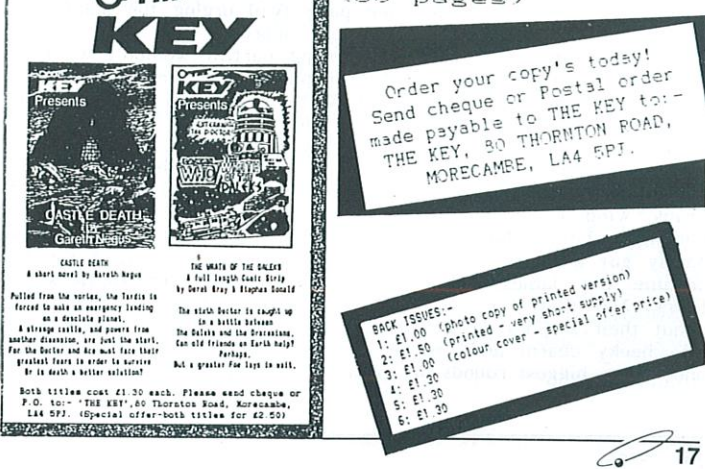
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PANOPTICON X

IF YOU'VE EVER SEEN Carry On Abroad, then I think you'll sympathise with the attendees of the 10th DWAS PanoptiCon, because the half-built hotel in the paradise island of Elsbels strangely reflected the Hotel Leofric which seemed throughout the weekend to be full of workmen drilling, sawing and banging!

The airconditioning system was hopeless, and in the dealers' room developed a leak which dripped all over the merchandise on display at the back of the room. To make matters worse the attitude of the hotel management was less than helpful and the best they could come up with to remedy the situation was a champagne bucket! Suffice it to say this did not bode well for the programme of events to follow.

Having previously attended only PanoptiCon X, I'm not a seasoned convention-goer but even I could detect that the Leofric didn't have the standard of facilities on offer that the Imperial College in Kensington boasted for the last three PanoptiCons. I understand from the stewards that the choice of venue was predominantly down to financial reasons with the last event having lost a few thousand (a debt reportedly paid off with the financial success of this event). Even so, as a mere attendee (and not even a member of the DWAS at that!), I could have told the organisers that 600 attendees into 500 main hall seats does not divide. Having charged £30 for two days for non-members such as myself (and £26 for members), the DWAS were expected to deliver the goods, and with their reputation in fandom in recent years more or less in tatters the PanoptiCon events have come to be widely regarded as the only jewel in DWAS's crown. So, did PanoptiCon X ultimately continue this tradition?

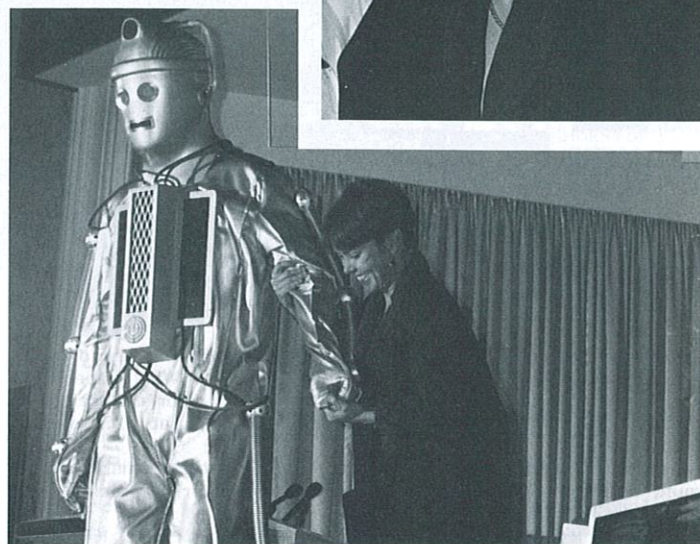
The whole strange phenomenon was billed to kick off at 9.30, Saturday 20th October, but it was 10.00 before things finally got underway with a welcome from organiser Andrew Beech. The event began with...*Ghost Light* episode one. There were a few pulled faces at the showing of something that 99.9% of the audience already had on video, but we all sat (or in my case stood) through it in anticipation of what was to come. Marc Platt, author of the story, bounded on to the stage 25 minutes later with explanations of the characters, the ideas and the settings which prompted questions being fired about Nimrod, Josiah, Control et al and, to be honest, I found the theories to be as confusing as the telecast! When I couldn't hear one of the answers I asked someone standing next to me what Platt had replied. "Who gives a monkeys?" came the reply, and I have to admit that I didn't, particularly. But if the *Ghost Light* panel wasn't my cup of tea, the least I could do was wait for the next item, and it was...*Ghost Light* episode two! By this time I was fed up with the story altogether and went to look around the dealers' room, but because of the oversight of not erecting a monitor or regular announcements in said room, I returned to find John Nathan-Turner and Sophie Aldred already in place answering questions!

To be honest, though, it was Sophie answering the questions with JNT acting as master of ceremonies (he really has let this BSB thing to go his head). Most of the chat was reserved for the describing of the studio and rehearsals for - you guessed it - *Ghost Light*, although the speculation over Sophie's future once again reared it's head; "I think Sylvester and I have got over the fact that we may not get cast if the series continues, so it won't be the end of the world for us if there's a new Doctor and companion. I'd very much like to carry on though." An amusing story about getting requests for Nitro 9 from schoolkids led into the first appearance of Frank (King's Demons) Windsor who, by chance, also had a rôle in, yes, that's right, *Ghost Light* (cue tearing out of hair!). Loud applause and cheers ensued as Frank told the audience; "It is a crime what they (the BBC) are doing to *Doctor Who*", and he even referred to the "day of action" leaflets left lying around the hotel (see page two) urging the audience's support. When asked how he would approach the part of the Doctor, he replied "It is a fascinating part...I wouldn't want to give away any ideas in case I ever played the part - I wouldn't mind recreating the memory of William Hartnell though." This seemed to find favour with most people.

Then the inevitable happened, namely *Ghost Light* episode three, which prompted a mass exodus out of the hall. This was followed by the appearance of Mark Ayres, Carl (Nimrod) Forgiore and Frank Windsor again, this time reuniting with his old Z Cars colleague James (Battlefield) Ellis. To say that Carl and Mark barely got a word in edgewise is an understatement; it rapidly became the James Ellis show with occasional interruptions by Frank. Not that this was bad by any means. Largely reminiscing about their Z Cars days, Ellis won over the audience totally with his cheeky charm and, as he left the stage, received what was one of the biggest rounds of applause heard all weekend.

THE LEOFRIC HOTEL,
COVENTRY,
OCTOBER 20-21st 1990

PHOTOS: (This page) Wendy Padbury, (Opposite page) Nicholas Briggs quizzes Jon Pertwee, "That's the way out, now GET OFF SYLVESTER!" advises convention organiser Andrew Beech, and Mary Tamm autographs copies of the latest Myth Makers tape, but little else...

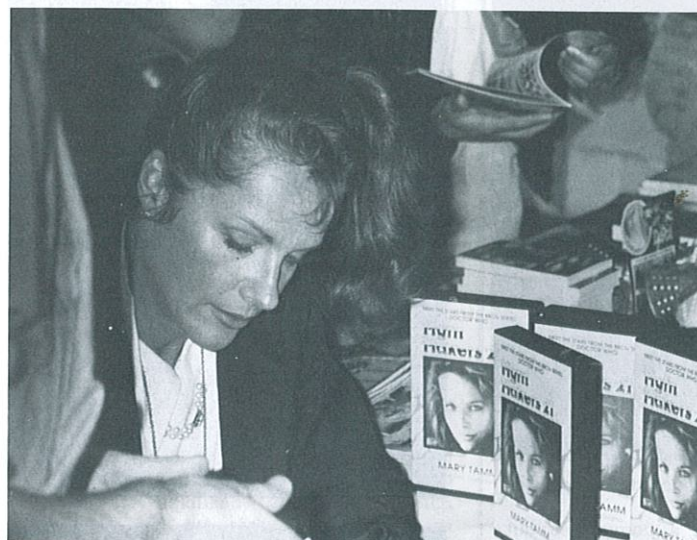


At 1.30pm the main hall commenced the screening of *The Invasion* parts 5,6,7,8 as a supposed prelude to the Troughton panel scheduled at 3pm. In the meantime there was a surprise appearance by Mary Tamm in the dealers' room signing copies of her new Myth Makers tape. Unfortunately that was all that we saw of Mary which is a great pity because the Tom Baker era was yet again not represented with a panel at PanoptiCon X, despite Graham Williams' sad passing. It is something that I can only hope will receive priority when organising next year's event.

Back to the main hall next, and for some reason the Troughton panel was postponed in favour of the Marvel panel hosted by John Freeman and comprising Alister Pearson, Lee Sullivan and Colin Howard. Having gotten thoroughly fed up with standing by now - and even more fed up with people disappearing for entire panels but leaving bags and coats on seats by way of 'reservation' - I shoved my way to the front row and squatted on the floor in anticipation of a punch up, or at the very least a slanging match, between the two artists. Thankfully all the differences between the two appear to have been resolved and the panel was controversy free, in keeping with the general mood of PanoptiCon X. As one might expect John and Alister got the lion's share of the questions which is a pity as Lee and Colin sat like a couple of mischievous schoolboys throughout and would undoubtedly have injected a bit of humour into the proceedings I'm sure given the chance. Among some generally mundane answers, which attendees have come to expect from umpteen Marvel panels across the country by now, the most interesting comment came from Freeman who informed the audience that, as a licensee, he and Marvel UK would continue to press the BBC for a verdict on *Who*'s future until an answer was forthcoming. Sullivan came up with an unusual assessment of his favourite story, *The Edge of Destruction*, calling it "a forerunner to *Twin Peaks*."

At 4.10pm the Troughton panel got underway at last featuring Nicholas Courtney and the "surprise" guest Wendy Padbury (whom John Freeman had unintentionally announced in the previous panel and who was a guest earlier this year anyway at Phoenix's London event). If ever there was a candidate for the least aged *Who* performer then Wendy must surely win the award hands down; even in close up she doesn't look a day older than she did in 1969, much to Courtney's annoyance! She revealed that the biggest thrill of getting the rôle of Zoe was the chance of working with Patrick Troughton whom she had admired for years for his portrayals of Dickens characters in the BBC's Sunday Classics. Courtney said that if the script was right then he wouldn't mind being killed off so long as the Brigadier left the series with a decent exit.

This panel was the last of the day so I headed downtown with a posse of friends to a superlative Chinese restaurant overlooking



Coventry's main shopping centre. When I returned at 9.30pm there was a spoof video depicting behind-the-scenes on the programme showing courtesy of Reeltime Pictures. The charity auction commenced around 10pm with Nick Briggs, Gary Russell and various guests helping to put items under the hammer and eventually raising about £1,300 (though not in aid of the DWAS Benevolent Fund I am informed, at least I hope not!). There followed some rare, "nay unique"(!), clips from other programmes with a *Doctor Who* theme like Blue Peter's *The Power of the Daleks* clip, Philip Hinchcliffe on Pebble Mill At One, etc. (come on Jan, you could have done better than this!!), and I managed to hold out until 12.30am before heading back to the De Vere (overflow) Hotel which, in reality, was the far plusher of the two - it even had a roof on top!

Sunday morning. I arrived back at the Leofric halfway through the showing of *The Planet of the Spiders* at 10.00am. The first panel was the reappearance of Nathan-Turner who was in candid mood following his recent parting of the waves with the BBC, and obviously on his guard in case of any potentially awkward questions from his staunchest of critics which, this year, never arose. He launched into a full explanation of the 1985 hiatus, or his theory anyway, which seemed to be largely due to the advent of Daytime Television on the BBC which was brought forward, thus leaving a problem for the financiers who hadn't allocated for it in their budgets. Thus Michael Grade had to find in the region of £7 million which he did by cancelling the likes of *The Hot Shoe Show*, *Pop Quiz* et al and "postponing" *Doctor Who* and replacing them with cheap US fodder and game shows. Having done this, Nathan-Turner reckons that he had to find a valid excuse for resting the show (apparently finding £7 million wasn't a good enough reason for Jo Public) and so Colin Baker was used as a scapegoat and replaced. "I honestly still think Colin Baker was denied the chance of being a supreme Doctor", enthused John, and while he undoubtedly could have been under fresh guidance most of the audience were in agreement. Yes, we are a fickle breed.

On the amusing side of the hiatus, Nathan-Turner recounted the frequent mailbags Grade was sent from ardent fans, which included a statuette of a horse's rear portion declaring "The Royal Horses A*se Award to Michael Grade from the *Doctor Who* Fans of America"; a voodoo doll of Grade complete with pins stuck in places guaranteed to bring tears to his eyes; and, perhaps most disturbing of all, a letter scribed in real blood! As a result the BBC, perhaps justifiably, tend to regard *Who* fans as "lunatics". Nathan-Turner added that he didn't know the plans for the series' future but thought it most likely that it would go independent, if only for his own benefit; "I would hate to go down in history as the man who killed off *Doctor Who*." Ho! Ho!

Following his departure from the stage, the entire audience aimed their cameras at the TARDIS prop for the arrival of the ever-popular Jon Pertwee. As always the usual anecdotes were in evidence, albeit wonderfully told. When someone asked about StarWatch, he confirmed that the project was now dead and cited Chris Leach's attempt to "run before he could walk" as one of the main reasons for it's demise. He also made a point of denying the recent News of the World "I'm broke" rubbish with regard to his *Who* and *Worzel* royalty payments and went on to criticise the organisers of the forthcoming Wakefield event for advertising his appearance when in fact he wasn't going (see last issue). However, some swift negotiations obviously ensued during the afternoon because, by the end of the day, messages were flashed onto the monitors saying that the event was still on and that Jon would be there after all. Incidentally, one of the better touches of the event was the link-up between what was being recorded to the hotel's own central system, in effect meaning that you could observe the event from any of the hotel's bedrooms! Not so memorable was the end of Pertwee's panel when he proceeded to leave the stage and enter the aisle in order to get to the autograph room. Evidently this would have necessitated him passing through the audience, but being a DWAS event of course we could have none of this so Andrew Beech began flustering like an over-protective mother hen screeching "Stop him! He must leave via the TARDIS and go backstage!", much to Jon's non amusement. Strange, these DWAS folk (and so much for Daniel Cohen's words of wisdom last issue).

K9 was next, offering some acid backchat to Nick Briggs who was attempting to auction off some autographed copies of Jon Pertwee's flop book *Namesakes*. Remaining in the hall I then witnessed a brilliant compilation of British telefantasy shows over the years accompanied by the chart hits of the day (a la The Rock & Roll Years) which gave way to goodbyes from James Ellis and friends, all echoing his "Save *Doctor Who*!" plea.

The finale was a solo performance by Sylvester McCoy, as usual on the manic side and preferring to crack jokes and take the mickey to discussing the series seriously (not that I'm criticising him for that). However, in a rare moment of seriousness he declared "Sophie and I have been treated very unfairly by the BBC; we've had no explanation from them at all as to what is happening." Despite this Sylvester made it clear that he would want to continue as the Doctor in order to complete the character developments that they were working on previously and, along the way, exploring a little more the immense sadness which the Doctor carries around with him having been witness to so much death, wars and suffering during his 900 years.

Sylvester was still going strong an hour later, much to Andrew Beech's concern because of the time which was in danger of over-running. Instead of ending the event in a diplomatic and sensible fashion, in a desperate bid to get McCoy off an embarrassed Alister Pearson was thrust onto the stage to present him with his fine *Ghost Light* (aarrggggghhhhh!!) artwork, which was presumably pre-planned with McCoy as his cue to exit stage left. Sylvester in turn thanked the talented artist "Andrew Beech" (cue scarlet face from Alister) for his efforts, and then - bar Sylvester's autograph session - it was all over. No closing ceremony, farewells, "see you next year" etc., indeed Beech's last recorded utterance was heard to be something like "Well, what are you still sitting there for?!!" A very drab and unpleasant ending indeed.

Summing up PanoptiCon X, I would have to say that it was something of a curate's egg. The reliance on video material as part of the main programme of events was far too great; I could have stayed at home to watch most of the stuff being shown. And how many more times can we listen to Nick Courtney's UNIT memories? Perhaps a welcome addition to next year's event would be a guest list comprising new faces and those we haven't seen for some time (Lalla Ward, Lis Sladen, Peter Purves, Jacqueline Hill, and definitely Tom Baker who would be worth the fees of all the other surviving Doctors combined just for the novelty value! Offer him megabucks with the proviso that he must guarantee to appear months in advance, hype his appearance up no end and that's his fee paid and more!). Disappointing too that Pertwee and McCoy weren't united on stage; we hear so often of the rapport between various Doctors at American events, yet here it seems we are prevented from seeing them together for some reason (maybe they really are one and the same person...).

It was brave of the DWAS to book the Leofric before it had even been built, but perhaps next time a hotel with proven suitable facilities could be chosen, The Grand Hotel in Birmingham for example, tried and tested many times in the past. Maybe even a theatre complex would be worth investigating, at least a venue with enough seats to accommodate all those who registered! Did I get my £30's worth? Just about, I suppose, but the true potential was lost amid some poor organisational decisions and a generally lacklustre programme of events.

Robert Cope

NEBULA '90

THE ADELPHI HOTEL, LIVERPOOL,
OCTOBER 6-7th 1990

READERS may recall that last year I was not awfully generous in reviewing the Liverpool-based Nebula event.

Well, this year was different, although I still don't like the Adelphi Hotel and am glad to learn that there is a change of venue planned for 1991's Nebula next September. As one guest put it: "The rooms are crap and the food's bland and expensive". The Kentucky over the road did good business.

People go to conventions for different reasons. Some (weirdos) enjoy sitting listening to guest panels, others without excess to the 'network' may prefer to languish in the video room (which, incidentally, the convention deliberately down-played this year and which was completely lacking last year), and some are content to prowl the dealers' room, while the rest have no desire other than to sit around drinking and chatting with friends.

Whatever, there was little cause for dissatisfaction here. An excellent selection of guests entertained in the main hall. Best of all was the opening panel which saw the reunion of Peter Davison and Nicola Bryant, and which was one of the best I have seen in many conventions, although the fee reportedly paid to the former is mildly disturbing (was he really worth it, guys?). In any event Davison gave us two panels on the Saturday and, being very cautious with his words, explained his and doubtless other celebrities' views on overseas conventions: "The choice between a free trip to Los Angeles and a free trip to Kettering is really no choice at all!" He also recounted how, on watching the transmission of

Earthshock, he noticed a floor assistant standing looking at a clipboard as the Cybermen marched past. He immediately called JNT:

"There's a floor assistant in shot!"

"Don't be ridiculous...My God, it's true!"

A lot of people will be scanning their copies of this story in the near future.

The obligatory auction, here in aid of Friends of the Earth, was thoughtfully split up, with a fine cabaret preceding the second half of the Saturday evening, highlight of which was a hilarious 'Sticky Moments' spoof wherein John Ainsworth donned a superb impression of Julian Clary as 'The Kate O'Mara Fan Club' and during which Sophie Aldred stuck a whole doughnut in her mouth and nearly choked to death and poor old Marc Platt had jokes mercilessly taken at his expense (e.g: "True or false - Ghost Light made total sense" and "Explain, in 30 seconds, the plot of..." and so on).

Highlight of the entire event (for my money anyway) was the screening in the small hours of Sunday morning of both episodes of STNG's *The Best of Both Worlds*, which was a magnificent coup. They were mind-blowingly good and demonstrated just how far the series has progressed since the episodes currently running on BBC2. Unfortunately it seems unlikely that the content of these episodes will allow the BBC to transmit them should the series still occupy the 6pm slot as and when...

Most conventions have a committee but Nebula 90 was essentially the single-handed work of Graeme Wood, with able hand from a few others. He (and they) did an excellent job and gave every attendee a thoroughly enjoyable weekend (certainly none of Daniel Cohen's concerns voiced last issue apply to this event).

The ambivalence with which I approached this convention - I nearly didn't go - will certainly be replaced by eager anticipation for Nebula '91... Peter Linford



PHOTOS: (Above and left) Peter Davison with Nicola Bryant and Nicholas Courtney, (below left) Joanne Bell & Tomek Bork from 'The Curse of Fenric' panel, (top) Nicola Bryant & Sophie Aldred, (above right) Sticky Moments for Sophie Aldred and friend hosted by John Ainsworth-Clary, (overleaf) Tomek Bork & Ian Briggs. (C) MARTIN BREEZE & NEBULA.

"EVERY STORY must have a beginning, a middle and an end..."

So begins Ian Briggs' novelisation of *The Curse of Fenric*, and he proceeds to give us all three in abundance. At a massive 188 pages, the book is only just pipped at the post as the longest ever Doctor Who novel by Victor Pemberton's *Fury from the Deep* (weighing in at 189 pages!).

The Curse of Fenric, the book, has very little in common with its television counterpart, but this is not entirely due to the inclusion of the, by now, infamous sequences which were recorded but edited out prior to transmission and soon to be premièred with next year's video release.

Briggs does more than simply reinstate scenes or embroider characters; he examines the whole nature of storytelling, from the fireside tales of the Norsemen to the Victorian Gothic writings of Bram Stoker via 1001 Nights. The book is a complicated mixture of metaphors, somewhat divorced from the blood-and-thunder romp that was Nicholas Mallett's interpretation. It attempts much, and while it must be said that this is sometimes the book's downfall, you cannot help but admire the gall of the author for trying.

FIVE CHRONICLES

The novel proper - the reworking of the script that we have come to expect from a Target Doctor Who book - is divided up into five "Chronicles". These are sandwiched with four fictionalised "documents" which attempt to tell the story of Fenric from other perspectives. The first document is titled "The Wolf-Time", which was itself one of the provisional titles for the televised story.

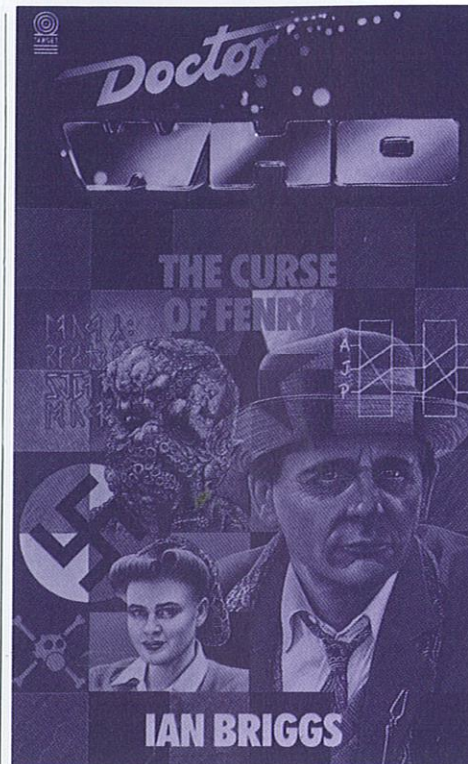
"The Wolf-Time" relates the original Norse legends of Fenric, as presented in a school essay by the 12-year-old Millington. This serves the dual purpose of first enlightening the reader to a bit of Norse mythology (for those of you who don't know your Yggdrasil from your elbow (The Yggdrasil was the Great Ash Tree that linked Heaven and Earth in the Norse legends)), while also showing the young Millington's obsession with the Viking legends. Briggs' research into this particular mythology is exhaustive, although he steers clear (probably deliberately) for fear of confusion with *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* to refer to the "Fall of the Gods" by its correct name, the Ragnarok.

The second document is in the style of a Viking saga, written in blank verse. This tells of the arrival of the flask in which Fenric was imprisoned in England and the death of the Vikings who brought this "evil" from the east.

The third document is in the form of a letter from Bram Stoker to his wife in which he relates the story of a girl who was found drained of blood in a remote Northumbrian village.

By the fourth document, one gets the impression that the joke is wearing a bit thin as we are treated, in cod-'Arabian Nights' fashion, to the tale of how the Doctor first imprisoned Fenric in the bottle. The style rapidly loses its charm, especially with the inclusion of some inexcusable and excruciating in-jokes and, worst of all, in the convolutions of the language it still tells us nothing about Fenric or the Doctor. There is a good enough reason for the first three documents, but the fourth seems superfluous to requirements.

THE STORYTELLER



The story is topped and tailed with two passages, the first from "the storyteller" who explains different ways in which a story can be observed, and the finale which gives us a glimpse of the future for the Doctor and Ace. The idea of a storyteller relating the adventure is carried through into the main body of the text, with a turn of phrase that would have done Kipling proud (even if it's not so ruddy hard to follow!).

The mark of a good book is one that embellishes the original teleplay, and *The Curse of Fenric* does this, and more. The atmosphere of the 1940's is brought across far better than it was on screen, where there was little more than a few bars of Glenn Miller in the soundtrack to reinforce the illusion. Of the sequences that were not in the televised version, by far the longest is that in which Jean and Phyllis meet some Home Guardsmen who have been sent to look for the girls by Miss Hardaker (it is because of the death of the Guards later at the hands of the Russians that prompts Miss Hardaker to deliver here "there is nothing but blackness in your hearts" speech).

All the characters benefit from more space, especially Millington and Judson, although theirs are very important persona changes. Millington's misogyny gives a sexual undertone to his treatment of the girls on the camp, and there is a much closer link between the Commander and the Scientist. It transpires that they were at school together and that it was Millington who caused Judson's paralysis:

"The cold mud of a rugby pitch...The expression Millington saw on Judson's face as Judson smiled across to one of the other players, a tall blond boy with clear blue eyes and a strong body. The sharp stabbing jealousy that surged through Millington as he ran towards Judson. The hatred as he drove his shoulder into Judson's back. The cracking - the awful cracking sound as Judson's body bent

backwards and his spine fractured."

This provides the reason for the antagonism between the two and stands out as a particularly "adult" passage in what is otherwise a book written, if not exactly for children, then certainly less "for adults" than Rona Munro's *Survival* or Donald Cotton's excellent books.

The structure of the adventure becomes more obvious in the book and, because we are privy to the thoughts of the characters (a luxury not afforded on television without resorting to soliloquy), we are able to sympathise with even the most unsympathetic characters. Miss Hardaker, we learn, was an unmarried mother and so never gained respect in polite village life. The Reverend Wainwright's fear, not of the enemy but of war itself, is brought out with precision. It is interesting to note that Briggs intended Wainwright to be a much younger man, although it is to Nicholas Parson's credit that he carried the spirit of the character so admirably.

Also apparent in the book is the great importance that Briggs has placed on the naming of his characters. It is an old trick that dates back to Dickens and beyond whereby if you want to emphasize the characteristics of a particular person, then you use names which suggest what they are. So in Fenric we have a hard woman (Miss Hardaker), a priest whose faith is waning (Wainwright) and so on. Coincidence? I think not, and there are undoubtedly many more subtle metaphors which I have yet to spot.

MINUTE DIFFERENCES

I will refrain from describing the minute differences between the televised Fenric and the book, because many will become obvious with the forthcoming video. What is worthy of mention is the treatment of the Haemovores which, in relation to all the other elements, come off rather badly. They are described beautifully - "like huge white slugs with legs and arms. Their eyes were swollen and bulbous, closed like a foetus in its uterus. And their mouths had turned into large suckers for draining blood..." - but apart from wandering about and flashing their scalpel-sharp fingernails they don't really have anything to do. The greatest crime of the book, however, is that Briggs makes no attempt to describe the Ancient Haemovore, other than to give it a name (Ingiger) and to refer to its androgynous, semi-female voice.

The ending of the story comes across in much the same way as it did on television - hurried, and with no real explanation as to why Fenric didn't just zap himself out of trouble as he had done earlier. Millington appears at the end to cradle Judson's body in his arms before he, Fenric and Ingiger are consumed in flames.

The Doctor and Ace escape; the latter to begin her new life as a woman, finally free of the "dangerous undercurrents".

The Curse of Fenric makes use of every line of its 188 pages. To fully do it justice would require much more space than Gary has allowed me for this review. There is no time to mention Ace's seduction of the soldier, or her "romance" with Sorin, or the Doctor's reply to Kathleen Dudman's question "Do you have any family yourself?". So, all I can recommend is that you find yourself a copy as soon as possible. And if you have a spare moment after that, why not try *Dracula*, then *The Arabian Nights*, the *Beowulf*, then...

David Miller

Published November 15th, Price £2.50

GARY LEIGH: Why do you think 'The Curse of Fenric' has won so many accolades and overwhelming fan approval? **IAN BRIGGS:** I didn't know it had to be honest! I knew it was popular but I didn't know it was that popular. Why? Maybe because it was more comprehensible in the end than some of the other stories. Maybe also because it touches on fairly deep nerves and it had creatures which seemed to be quite popular - I didn't realise that when I writing it but, in retrospect, people have picked up on the Haemovores. And it certainly had extremely good performances from quite a lot of the cast.

Why I think it was a good programme in the end is that it had a very good team spirit on it. When we were shooting it there was this feeling that everybody was working together and there was this very good atmosphere which I think came through. Whether or not that's why people like it I don't know. We were lucky with who we got in the cast and crew, so people got on well. I also felt that the weather had something to do with it. Given all the snow, we suffered all that together and it was kind of like the Blitz almost - once we had been through all that together there was this team spirit that lingered a little and sort of went into everything else.

What inspired your idea for 'The Curse of Fenric'?

It was a combination of things, no single thing, just tying together some strands. Andrew Cartmel and I were interested in computers so we felt like doing something about computers. Andrew wanted a period story, he didn't regard the 1970s as 'period', which was my first suggestion. I was also interested in the Blitz and things like that so that was another strand that went into it. Scandanavian mythology was something else that I was interested in so we drew that in, and the vampire element was another strand and we just combined all of those things together and came up with Fenric!

How long did it take?

We first started talking about it in May 1988, about 12 months before we shot it, but nobody had given the go-ahead for another season by then so it was just some interesting ideas which I typed up and stored in the word processor. And then, come October, Andrew said 'Right, we're going ahead', so I printed out two copies of my document and then we sat down and started talking. It took from October to January (1988/9) to actually work out the story and write the first draft of every episode. I think I delivered the last draft some time in February.

The book has taken slightly longer coming, originally scheduled for release last May. It's taken a long time because, basically, I couldn't finish it (laughs). There were problems with the end of the television programme which glossed over a number of things. I felt the underwater scene at the end with Ace didn't really work because I didn't really know myself what happened to her down there and it took me a long time to work that out. I was happy with it as I wrote it and when we shot it; it was only afterwards when I watched it that I thought that doesn't really work.

Was this because the production team hadn't interpreted it correctly?

No, I had got it wrong!

You had got it wrong?!

Right! Let's not blame anybody else - they shot what I wrote. In fact it wasn't so much getting it wrong as I still didn't understand what had happened to

IAN BRIGGS

WITH THE BOOK AND THE VIDEO OF 'THE CURSE OF FENRIC' IMMINENT, 'DWB' TALKS TO THIS AWARD-WINNING STORY'S AUTHOR...



Ace under the water, and that's why it was glossed over. I didn't explore it in depth because I myself didn't know what had happened down there. I didn't realise until I saw it that it wasn't working for me.

It was a very evocative sequence and it worked so well in a surreal sort of way that I think people didn't find it necessary to question its meaning.

It was right but I didn't understand why it was right, if you know what I mean. Writing a novel is different to a script - you have to understand it a lot deeper and you have to go into a lot greater depth in a novel than you do in a TV script. So I rewrote the ending several times but it just always felt superficial from my point of view and that was the delay. It wasn't lack of effort or anything like that. It was simply I was unable to understand what was happening until about last July or so.

It's a very brave admission for an author to make that he doesn't fully understand his own work!

(Laughs) Well you can feel it, and I felt that that was what was happening to Ace but I didn't actually understand it, because what was happening to her was a lot more than simply coming to terms with her mother, which was part of it. It's a lot to do with "the meaning of life" and what she goes through is actually a very extreme thing, for which you need to understand extremes of people's psychology and so on.

Do you think you perhaps went in too deep?

Well, it wasn't until I got in really deep that I was able to work my way back up and understand what was happening, and then I just wrote it. There is an epilogue in the book, which comes after what happens in the television story, and I could never have written that until I'd understood - at a very deep level - what was happening, and then once I understood that it was very easy to understand what was going on on the surface. Do you see what I mean? You need to understand something about three levels lower down

than you're writing, and what I felt was wrong with the script was that I was only understanding it at the level I was writing. Have you used the book as an opportunity of exploring aspects of the story in more depth?

Yes, there's quite a lot of new stuff which explains the background of the story.

Are these things you have woven into the book that were not in the television version but that have arisen having examined the story more deeply?

No. They are things which were there in odd lines of dialogue in the television programme but which I felt the novel was an appropriate opportunity to expand upon and give people a lot more background. So, for instance, we know a lot more about Fenric, about how he comes to be in the flask, how the flask ends up in Maiden's Point, how the Vikings come into it, etc.

It's one of the longest Target novels to date, the second longest in fact. As with what occurred with the television version, was there a danger of you seriously over-running the specified word count and were you tempted to write even more but held back?

No. I wrote what I felt it needed and I'm surprised to hear it's so long compared to other Doctor Who novels. I thought it was quite short - it's only about 43-44,000 words.

Maybe W.H.Allen opted for larger type? You said that you've elaborated in the book on material that wasn't in the screened version. Will the expanded video release coming out in February contain a lot of vital, explanatory scenes that were cut due to the over-running?

I haven't seen the final edits but Mark Ayres and I disagree over this. I myself don't think anything was cut out that was vital, whereas he does. I think that the stuff that got cut was nice but not necessary to the plot, although putting it back in helps add to the richness of it. If people didn't understand it the first time around, then maybe something said twice rather than just once will help them, since I think that all we did was cut out secondary explanations and repetition.

The new version won't therefore be slow and repetitive will it?

No. I think it will add to the richness with the emotion and the evocative nature of it. There is one little bit that I was sorry that we'd lost from the television version from episode one and it's only about 15 seconds long. It's when Ace is lying by herself on the bunk in the dark and right at the end of that scene we did hear a line from Kathleen talking to the crying baby and that was the first time we ever heard Kathleen. That was cut from the screened version which I was always sad about, although I understand why we did, but Mark tells me that's gone back in so I shall be happy.

The worst scene, I felt, was one which was kept in the television version, where Kathleen hands Ace the photo in episode four while being pursued by the Haemovores. To me that slowed down the action terribly and lessened its impact. I really should have written it in earlier when they were together, in the quietness of the dormitory for instance, where it would have been quite poignant.

Didn't the production team accidentally wipe some footage when they were editing the televised version?

Yes, it was a whole reel! From what I understand what they lost was a lot of close-ups at the climax and some of the battle stuff as well. What happened was

that they taped that and then accidentally taped over it. If you look at the screened version and probably also the video there's one close-up of Sophie right at the end where she's on her knees looking at the Doctor (or maybe it's just before she falls to her knees). Now all the close-ups there were lost, which is a shame because in the climax you need close-ups. So to get around it Nick Mallett took another close-up from somewhere else where she was actually looking in the opposite direction and flicked it around and zoomed in to make it close enough. It looks OK, I mean you have to look carefully to notice it.

What was your reaction when you heard that 'The Curse of Fenric' was being brought out on video?

I was surprised because I didn't think they brought out recent stories, but obviously they thought that there would be a market for it if they could put back in some of the stuff that was lost through time.

There are already rumblings of a 'Ghost Light' extended release.

A 12" club remix no doubt!

Are you involved at all with the Fenric extended release?

No. A little to begin with when BBC Enterprises sent the contract through to my agent for me to sign because my first fear was that they would just get some hack in to join up all the ends, but when I heard that Nick Mallett was re-editing it I thought, 'fine' because Nick knows what he's doing; he did a very good job first time round and knows how it will go together ideally and there is absolutely no reason why I needed to interfere with it at all.

Nick Mallett certainly surprised a lot of people with his work on Fenric. Were you aware of his previous 'Doctor Who' work? Yes. I knew Paradise Towers because I was working on the programme when that went out, and the one in the previous season which I'd watched all of, to try to get the hang of Mel and all that before I started - but I didn't connect Nick with (The Mysterious Planet) until later.

Were you happy, then, with the idea of him directing your story?

Yes. Something I thought from his previous work was that he and I would actually make a very good team because we seem to be interested in the same sorts of things - like characters, strong scenes - and were not interested in lots of hi-tec action.

He certainly benefitted from working on location as opposed to in the studio.

I think basically he's more film-minded than TV studio-minded. It was all single camera set-ups except for the very few odd scenes where we were really pushed for time. In actual fact that is probably another reason why the programme was successful, because he and I were in tune with each other and we had an extremely good working relationship. I was there at rehearsals even and I've never known a director actually invite a writer along to rehearsals - it's difficult enough being invited to the shoot! We just weren't treading on each other's toes at all; I never felt 'Oh God, he's getting this wrong, I've got to jump up and put it right', and he never felt that I was being intrusive in making odd suggestions. We just worked very well as a team.

Your recent Casualty episode attracted roughly three times the number of viewers as 'The Curse of Fenric'. Were you disheartened when the Season 26 ratings came through?

The ratings I'm not bothered about. It's nice if lots of people watch something

you've done if it's good, but the number of people watching it depends on so many other things; what's on the other side, how good the trailers were, what the weather's like...all sorts of things, so the ratings didn't worry me. I was disappointed, though, with the AI's, which are the figures I look at. Given the choice between six million watching your programme and thinking it's appalling or three million watching it and really enjoying it, I mean, which would you have?!

Were you pleased with your Appreciation Index figures then?

I would have liked them to be higher. They were OK but I wish I knew why they weren't higher.

Do you mean in comparison to other programmes or just within 'Doctor Who'?

Well, they were lower in comparison to Dragonfire! The only thing which did happen which I was quite pleased about was that they didn't drop off towards the end of the run, so the AI did at least hold up right to the end. It's not just Doctor Who but it happens on a lot of other programmes that you get AI which drops off at the end because people feel that the ending didn't live up to their expectations.

As in the case of Ghost Light! Are you doing any more Casualty now that Andrew Cartmel's left?

Not at the moment because I'm busy on other things like The Bill. I've also been doing some corporate videos and there's a screenplay that I've been wanting to write for ages and I just want to sit down and write that. It's going to be a labour of love, nobody's going to make it but I want to write it.

If 'Doctor Who' returns would you like to continue writing for it?

Yes. Obviously it depends on who and what, like all programmes, but given that I've enjoyed working on it and the results have been quite good, all other things being equal if I had a choice between working on Doctor Who and something else I would prefer to work on Doctor Who. But it depends on who's doing it and what they're doing. If it's somebody different doing it a different way it might not be my style in which case they might not want me.

Although you are quite versatile - 'Dragonfire' and 'The Curse of Fenric' are very different styles of story.

Well, Dragonfire was comedy and Fenric was a horror story.

Would you actually tag 'Dragonfire' a comedy then? Was it written as a comedy?

Yes. It started off that Dragonfire was meant to be the upbeat comedy story and Malcolm Khol's was meant to be more 'adventure story', and then it sort of changed halfway through, but I never lost the comedy element in Dragonfire. I still feel, looking at it, that it is basically a comedy. There are lots of very funny things in it, not things that you fall about laughing at, but surreal things.

Intentionally funny or funny things that came out during production do you think?

There were things in there that were written as sort of 'oddball' in a way. I mean, things like Stellar's mother and the philosophical guard. Also the type of things Glitz says - his Arthur Daly-ish turn of phrase.

When you devised Ace's character did you map out her background and how she should evolve in the series in a guide for subsequent writers?

At the time I didn't even know if I'd ever work on the programme again so we weren't planning a sequel or anything. But there was always the potential there; both in terms of possible character developments and also the suspicion that the time-storm that carried Ace to Iceworld wasn't quite the accident she imagined. It was nice to be able to pick all this up again in Fenric. She simply caught the imagination of the writers so no, we didn't sit down and plan it in advance.

To end this interview on a cliffhanger, literally, would you mind explaining the exact reasoning behind the closing moments of 'Dragonfire' episode one?

Do you want the reason why the Doctor went over the edge or the reason why that was the cliffhanger?

Both preferably!

Right, he went over the edge because he was reading the map and the map said 'You go down at this point' and so he had two choices; either he could go back to the TARDIS and call it a day or he could go down, and he decided to go down. The reason why that was the cliffhanger was because originally we were going to end on the creature and the whole structure of that episode was leading up to the advent of the creature, and so the Doctor's acrobatics was a bit of an anti-climax. But we felt that we should end the episode on the Doctor rather than Mel and a completely unknown character as Ace was then.

Let's be honest, I got it wrong. The cliffhanger I wrote was a cock-up!

Ian Briggs, thank you very much.

INTERVIEWED OCTOBER 18th 1990

500 EYES

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